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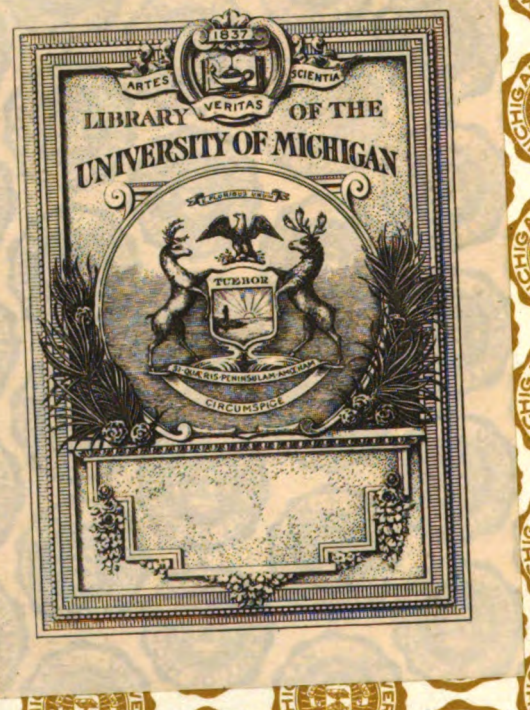
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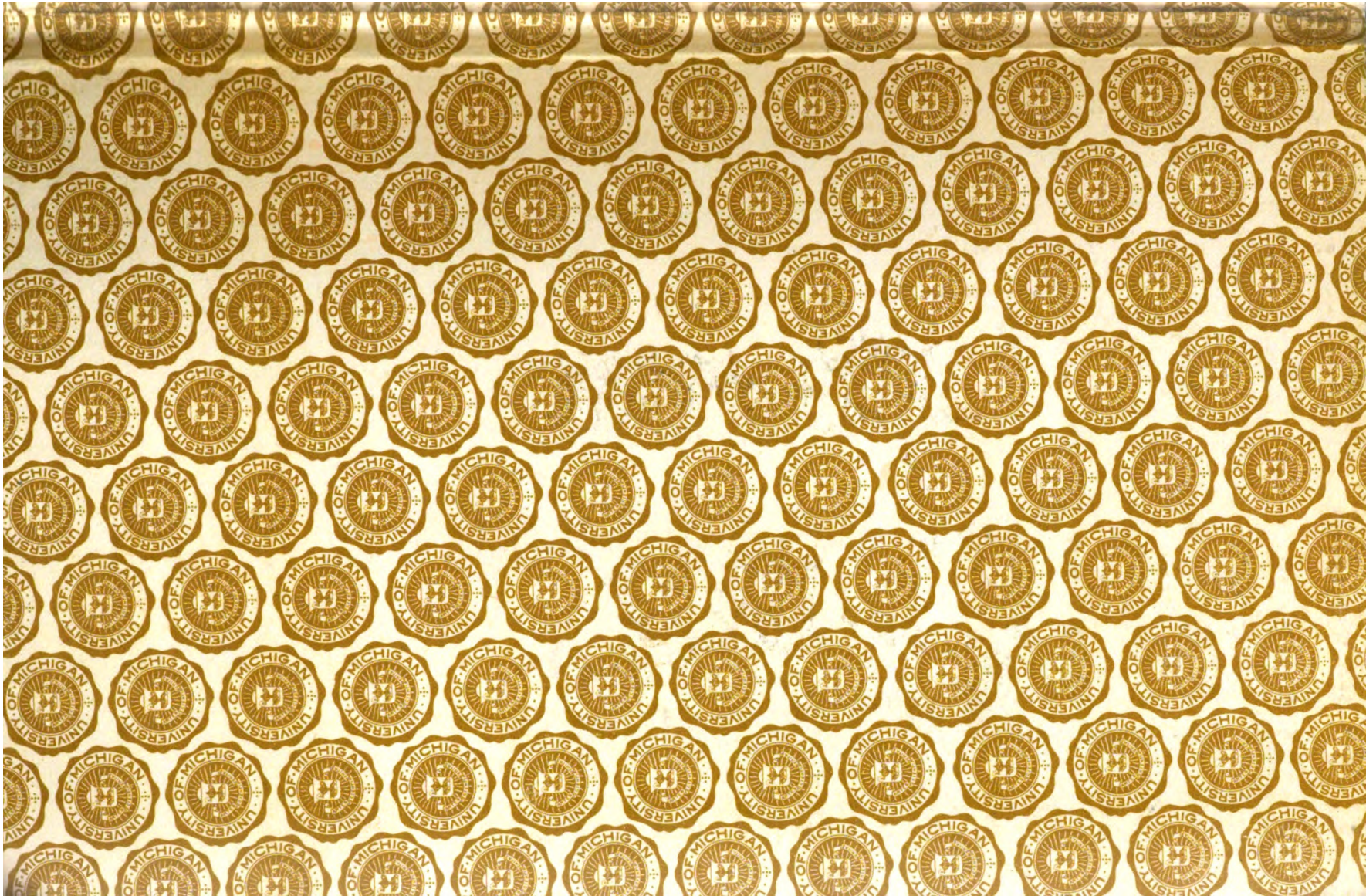
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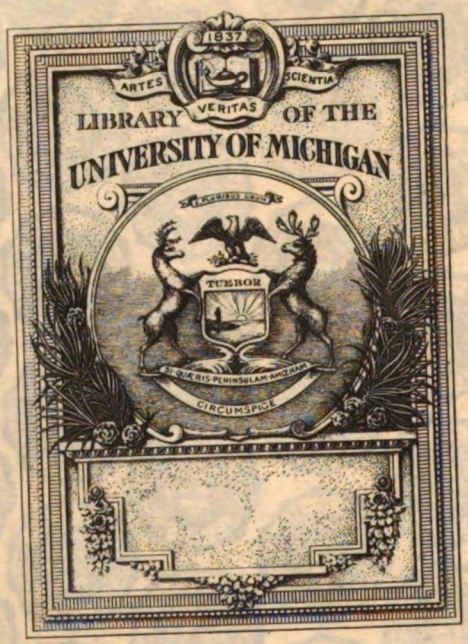
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EM By RUDYARD KIPLING

JAN 18 1928

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

A. CONAN DOYLE
H. A. VACHELL
H. ASHTON-WOLFE
SYBIL THORNDIKE'S Life-Story

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An Illustrated Monthly

Vol. LXXV

JANUARY TO JUNE

London:

GEORGE NEWNES, LTD., 8—11, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, AND EXETER STREET, STRAND.

1928

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LONDON:
Printed by NEWNES & PEARSON PRINTING CO., LTD., Exmoor Street, Ladbroke Grove, W.10,
for
MESSRS. GEORGE NEWNES, LTD., 8-11, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C.2.

JANUARY, 1928.

Supplication of the Black Aberdeen

By

RUDYARD KIPLING

Illustrated by G.L. Stampa

I pray! My little body and whole span
Of years is Thine, my Owner and my Man.
For Thou hast made me—unto Thee I owe
This dim, distressed half-soul that hurts me so,
Compact of every crime, but, none the less,
Broken by knowledge of its naughtiness.
Put me not from Thy Life—'tis all I know.
If Thou forsake me, whither shall I go?

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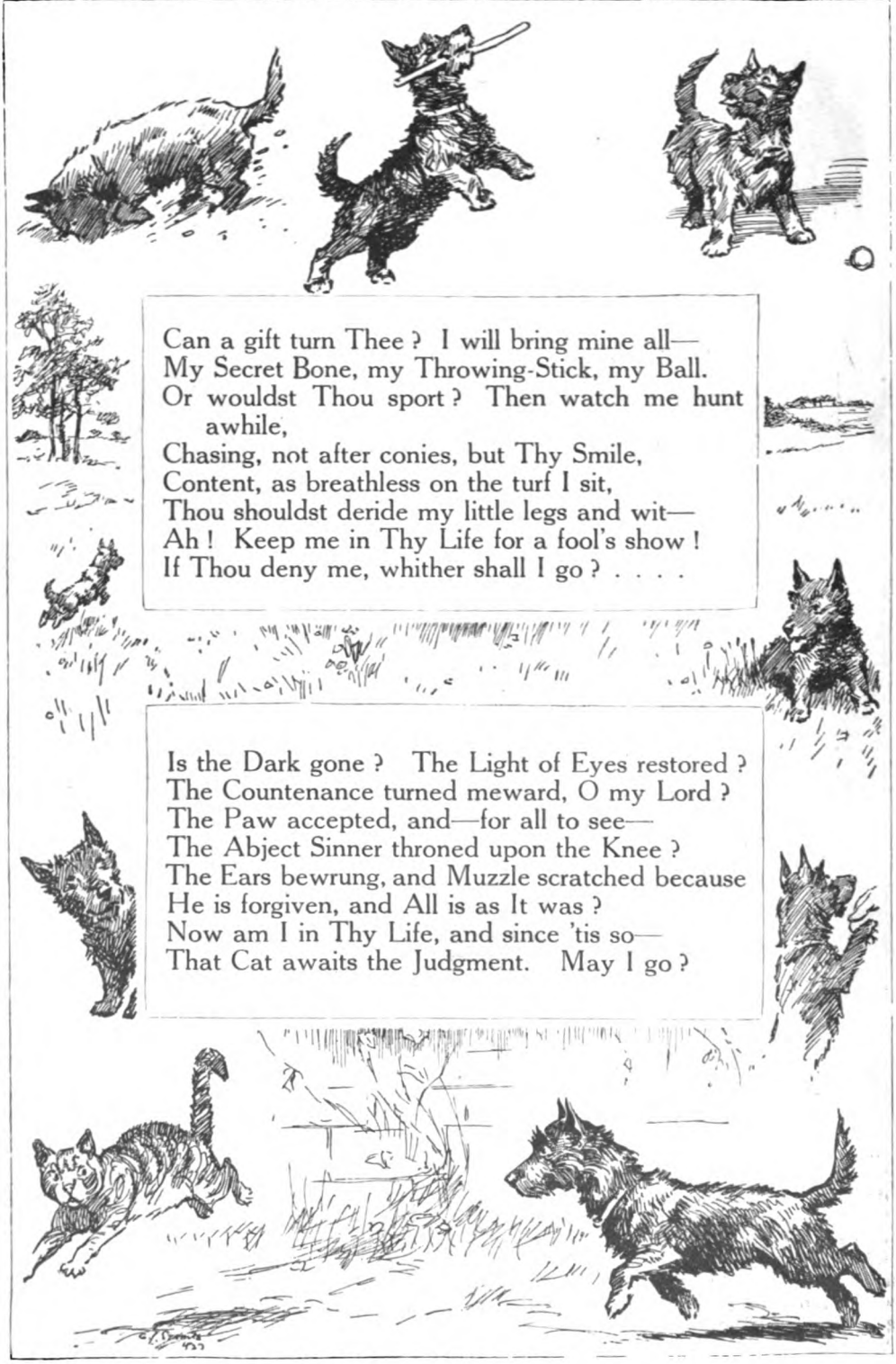
Thine is the Voice with which my Day begins :
Thy Foot my refuge, even in my sins.
Thine Honour hurls me forth to testify
Against the Unclean and Wicked passing by.
(But when Thou callest they are of Thy Friends,
Who readier than I to make amends ?)
I was Thy Deputy with high and low—
If Thou dismiss me, whither shall I go ?

I have been driven forth on gross offence
That took no reckoning of my penitence.
And, in my desolation—faithless me !—
Have crept for comfort to a woman's knee !
Now I return, self-drawn, to meet the just
Reward of Riot, Theft and Breach of Trust.
Put me not from Thy Life—though this is so.
If Thou forsake me, whither shall I go ?

Into The Presence, flattening while I crawl—
From head to tail, I do confess it all.
Mine was the fault—deal me the stripes—but spare
The Pointed Finger which I cannot bear !
The Dreadful Tone in which my Name is named.
That sends me 'neath the sofa-frill ashamed !
(Yet, to be near Thee, I would face that woe.)
If Thou reject me, whither shall I go ?

Supplication of the Black Aberdeen



Can a gift turn Thee? I will bring mine all—
My Secret Bone, my Throwing-Stick, my Ball.
Or wouldst Thou sport? Then watch me hunt
awhile,
Chasing, not after conies, but Thy Smile,
Content, as breathless on the turf I sit,
Thou shouldst deride my little legs and wit—
Ah! Keep me in Thy Life for a fool's show!
If Thou deny me, whither shall I go? . . . .

Is the Dark gone? The Light of Eyes restored?
The Countenance turned meward, O my Lord?
The Paw accepted, and—for all to see—
The Abject Sinner throned upon the Knee?
The Ears bewrung, and Muzzle scratched because
He is forgiven, and All is as It was?
Now am I in Thy Life, and since 'tis so—
That Cat awaits the Judgment. May I go?

The MARACOT DEEP:

The Lost World under the Sea

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Illustrated by
TOM PEDDIE

SYNOPSIS OF THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.

Professor Maracot organized an expedition for studying deep-sea life, and with two assistants—Cyrus Headley, an Oxford Rhodes scholar, and Bill Scanlan, a mechanic—he sailed from England. Shortly afterwards, in a letter written from the Canary Islands, Headley described how Professor Maracot had announced that on board was a steel cage in which they were to be lowered to the bed of the ocean. Nearly a year of silence followed this letter, when news of Professor Maracot was received in an extraordinary manner. The captain of a steamer reported the finding of a silvery globe floating in the water, which contained a further message from Headley. This stated that the cage with its three occupants was successfully lowered over the brink of the Maracot Deep when a gigantic sea-monster snapped the chain, and the cage sank in the enormous cavity. The narrative then told how Professor Maracot and his companions were startled to find on the ocean bed a submarine race of men who rescued them from their cage by means of transparent suits in which they could breathe without difficulty. Headley described how, by means of a marvellous thought-transference apparatus, the adventurers were able to relate the disaster which had overtaken them. They were also able to communicate brokenly in Greek with a priest—evidently one of a race descended from the ancient Greeks and held captive by the Atlanteans.

IV.

IT was a few days after our arrival that our hosts or our captors—we were dubious sometimes as to which to call them—took us out for an expedition upon the bottom of the ocean. Six of them came with us, including Manda, the chief. We assembled in the same exit chamber in which we had originally been received, and we were now in a condition to examine it a little more closely. It was a very large place, at least a hundred feet each way, and its low walls and ceiling were green with marine growths and dripping with moisture. A long row of pegs, with marks which I presume were numbers, ran round the whole room, and on each was hung one of the semi-transparent bells of vitrine and a pair of the shoulder batteries which ensured respiration. The floor was of flagged stone worn into concavities, the footsteps of many generations, these hollows now lying as pools of shallow water. The whole was highly illuminated by fluor tubes round the cornice. We were fastened into our vitrine coverings, and a stout pointed staff made of some light metal was handed to each of us. Then, by signals, Manda ordered us to take a grip of a rail which ran round the room.

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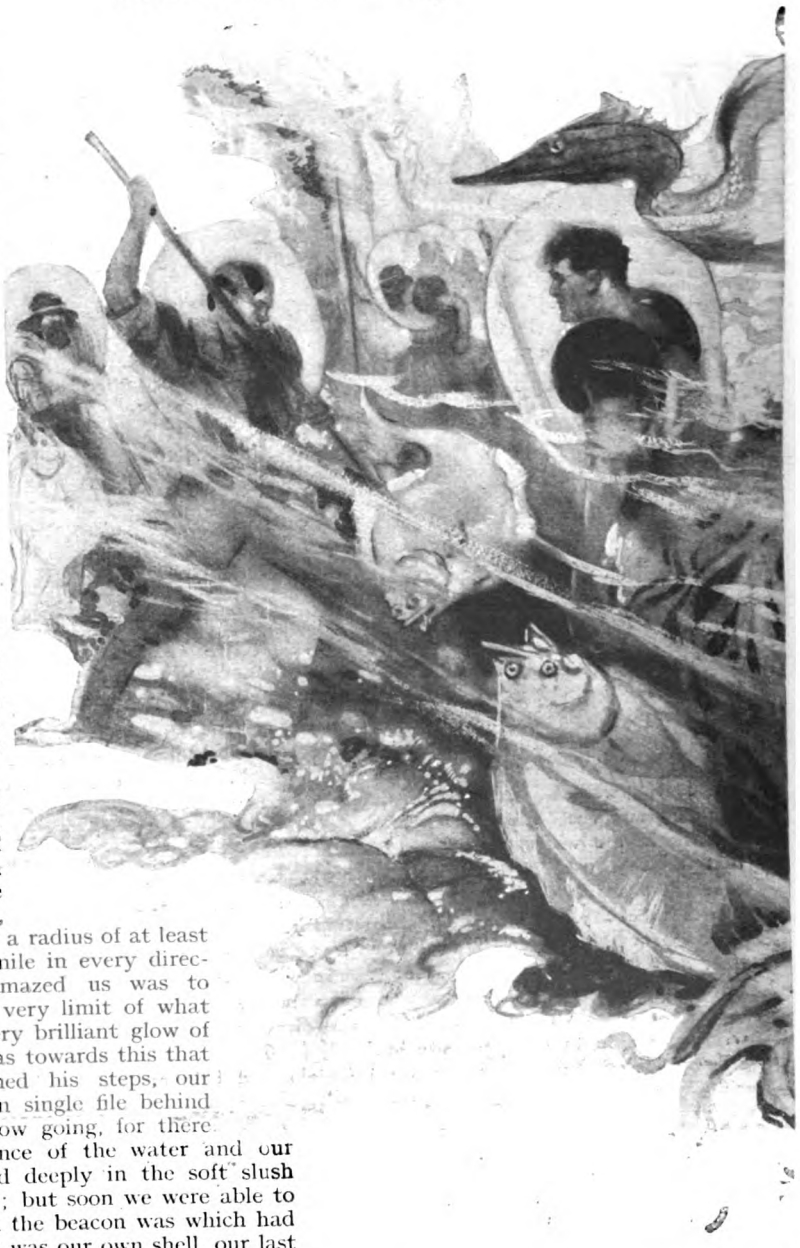
he and his friends setting us an example. The object of this precaution soon became evident, for as the outer door swung slowly open the sea water came pouring in with such force that we should have been swept from our feet but for this precaution. It rose rapidly, however, to above the level of our heads, and the pressure upon us was eased. Manda led the way to the door, and an instant afterwards we were out on the ocean bed once more, leaving the portal open behind us ready for our return.

Looking round us in the cold, flickering, spectral light which illuminates the bathybian plain, we could see for a radius of at least a quarter of a mile in every direction. What amazed us was to observe, on the very limit of what was visible, a very brilliant glow of radiance. It was towards this that our leader turned his steps, our party walking in single file behind him. It was slow going, for there was the resistance of the water and our feet were buried deeply in the soft slush with every step; but soon we were able to see clearly what the beacon was which had attracted us. It was our own shell, our last reminder of terrestrial life, which lay tilted upon one of the cupolas of the far-flung building, with all its lights still blazing. It was three-quarters full of water, but the imprisoned air still preserved that portion in which our electric instalment lay. It was strange indeed as we gazed into it to see the familiar interior with our settees and instruments still in position, while several good-sized fish like minnows in a bottle swam round and round inside it. One after the other our party clambered in through the open flap, Maracot to rescue a book of notes which floated on the surface, Scanlan and I to pick up some personal belongings. Manda came also with one or two of his comrades, examining with the greatest interest the



Scanlan and I captured a couple of the
lost in wonder at the

large brown flat fish, but Maracot was ocean beauties around him.

bathometer and thermometer, with the other instruments which were attached to the wall. The latter we detached and took away with us. It may interest scientists to know that forty degrees Fahrenheit represents the temperature at the greatest sea depth to which man has ever descended, and that it is higher, on account of the chemical decomposition of the ooze, than the upper strata of the sea.

Our little expedition had, it seems, a definite object besides that of allowing us a little exercise upon the bed of the ocean. We were hunting for food. Every now and then I saw our comrades strike sharply

down with their pointed sticks, impaling each time a large brown flat fish, not unlike a turbot, which was numerous, but lay so closely in the ooze that it took practised eyes to detect it. Soon each of the little men had two or three of these dangling at their sides. Scanlan and I soon got the knack of it, and captured a couple each, but Maracot walked as one in a dream, quite lost in his wonder at the ocean beauties around him and making long and excited speeches which were lost to the ear, but visible to the eyes from the contortion of his features.

Our first impression had been one of monotony, but we soon found that the grey plains were broken up into varied formations by the action of the deep-sea currents which flowed, like submarine rivers, across them. These streams cut channels in the soft slime and exposed the beds which lay beneath. The floor of these banks consisted of the red clay which forms the base of all things on the surface of the bed of the ocean, and they were thickly studded with white objects which I imagined to be shells, but which proved, when we examined them, to be the ear bones of whales and the teeth of sharks and other sea monsters. One of these teeth which I picked up was fifteen inches long, and we could but be thankful that so fearful a monster frequented the higher levels of ocean. It belonged, according to Maracot, to a giant killing grampus or Orca gladiator. It recalled the observation of Mitchell Hedges that even the most terrible sharks that he had caught bore upon their bodies the marks which showed that they had encountered creatures larger and more formidable than themselves.

There was one peculiarity of the ocean depths which impresses itself upon the observer. There is, as I have said, a constant cold light rising up from the slow phosphorescent decay of the great masses of organic matter. But above, all is black as night. The effect is that of a dim winter day, with a heavy black thundercloud lying low above the earth. Out of this black canopy there falls slowly an incessant snowstorm of tiny white flakes, which glimmer against the sombre background. These are the shells of sea snails and other small creatures who live and die in the five miles of water which separate us from the surface, and though many of these are dissolved as they fall and add to the lime salts in the ocean, the rest go in the course of ages to form that deposit which had entombed the great city in the upper part of which we now dwelt.

LEAVING our last link with earth beneath us, we pushed on into the gloom of the submarine world and soon we were met by a completely new development. A moving patch appeared in front of us, which broke up as we approached it into a crowd of men, each in his vitrine envelope, who were dragging behind them broad sledges heaped with coal. It was heavy work, and the poor devils were bending and straining, tugging hard at the shark-skin ropes which served as traces. With each gang of men there was one who appeared to be in authority, and it interested us to see that the leaders and the workers were clearly of a different race. The latter were tall men, fair, with blue eyes and powerful bodies. The others were, as already described, dark and almost negroid, with squat, broad frames. We could not inquire into the mystery at that moment, but the impression was left upon my mind that the one race represented the hereditary slaves of the other, and Maracot was of opinion that they may have been the descendants of those Greek prisoners whose goddess we had seen in the Temple.

Several droves of these men, each drawing their loads of coal, were met by us before we came to the mine itself. At this point the deep-sea deposits and the sandy formations which lay beneath them had been cut away, and a great pit exposed, which consisted of alternate layers of clay and coal, representing strata in the old perished world of long ago which now lay at the bottom of the Atlantic. At the various levels of this huge excavation we could see gangs of men at work hewing the coal, while others gathered it into loads and placed it in baskets, by means of which it was hoisted up to the level above. The whole mine was on so vast a scale that we could not see the other side of the enormous pit which so many generations of workers had scooped in the bed of the ocean. This, then, transmuted into electric force, was the source of the motive power by which the whole machinery of Atlantis was run. It is interesting, by the way, to record that the name of the old city had been correctly preserved in the legends, for when we had mentioned it to Manda and others they first looked greatly surprised that we should know it, and then nodded their heads vigorously to show that they understood.

Passing the great coal pit—or, rather, branching away from it to the right—we came on a line of low cliffs of basalt, their surface as clear and shining as on the day when they were shot up from the bowels of the earth, while their summit, some hundreds of feet above us, loomed up against the dark background. The base of these volcanic cliffs was draped in a deep jungle of high seaweed, growing out of tangled masses of crinoid corals laid down in the old terrestrial days. Along the edge of this thick undergrowth we wandered for some time, our companions beating it with their sticks and

driving out for our amusement an extraordinary assortment of strange fishes and crustacea, now and again securing a specimen for their own tables. For a mile or more we wandered along in this happy fashion, when I saw Manda stop suddenly and look round him with gestures of alarm and surprise. These submarine gestures formed a language in themselves, for in a moment his companions understood the cause of his trouble, and then with a shock we realized it also. Dr. Maracot had disappeared.

They dashed forward with their pointed sticks, and Manda flashed a powerful electric lantern in the faces of the loathsome monsters.

He had certainly been with us at the coal pit, and he had come as far as the basalt cliffs. It was inconceivable that he had got ahead of us, so it was evident that he must be somewhere along the line of jungle in our rear. Though our friends were disturbed, Scanlan and I, who knew something of the good man's absent-minded eccentricities, were confident that there was no cause for alarm, and that we should soon find him loitering over some sea form which had attracted him. We all turned to retrace our steps, and had hardly gone a hundred yards before we caught sight of him.

But he was running—running with an agility which I should have thought impossible for a man of his habits. Even the least athletic can run, however, when fear is the pace-maker. His hands were outstretched for help, and he stumbled and blundered forward with clumsy energy. He had good cause to exert himself, for three horrible creatures were close at his heels. They were tiger crabs, striped black and white, each about the size of a Newfoundland dog. Fortunately, they were themselves not very swift travellers, and were scurrying along the soft sea bottom in a curious sidelong fashion which was little faster than that of the terrified fugitive.

Their wind was better, however, and they would probably have had their horrible claws upon him in a very few minutes had

not our friends intervened. They dashed forward with their pointed sticks, and Manda flashed a powerful electric lantern, which he carried in his belt, in the faces of the loathsome monsters, who scuttled into the jungle and were lost to view. Our comrade sat down on a lump of coral and his face showed that he was exhausted by his adventure. He told us afterwards that he had penetrated the jungle in the hope of securing what seemed to him to be a rare specimen of the deep-sea Chimoera, and that he had blundered into the nest of these fierce tiger crabs, who had instantly dashed after him. It was only after a long rest that he was able to resume the journey.

OUR next stage after skirting the basalt cliffs led us to our goal. The grey plain in front of us was covered at this point by irregular hummocks and tall projections, which told us that the great city of old lay beneath it It would all have been completely buried for ever by the ooze, as Herculaneum has been by lava or Pompeii by ashes, had an entrance to it not been excavated by the survivors of the Temple. This entrance was a long, downward cutting, which ended up in a broad street with buildings exposed on either side. The walls of these buildings were occasionally cracked and shattered, for they were not of the solid construction which had preserved the Temple, but the interiors were in most cases exactly as they had been when the catastrophe occurred, save that sea changes of all sorts, beautiful and rare in some cases and horrifying in others, had modified the appearances of the rooms. Our guides did not encourage us to examine the first ones which we reached, but hurried us onwards until we came to that which had clearly been the great central citadel or palace round which the whole town centred. The pillars and columns and vast sculptured cornices and friezes and staircases of this building exceeded anything which I have ever seen upon earth. Its nearest approach seemed to me to be the remains of the Temple of Karnak at Luxor in Egypt, and, strange to say, the decorations and half-effaced engravings resembled in detail those of the great ruin beside the Nile, and the lotus-shaped capitals of the columns were the same. It was an amazing experience to stand in the marble tessellated floors of those vast halls, with great statues looming high above one on every side, and to see, as we saw that day, huge silvery eels gliding above our heads and frightened fish darting away in every direction from the light which was projected before us. From room to room we wandered, marking every sign of luxury and occasionally of that lascivious folly which is said, by the lingering legend, to have drawn God's curse upon the people. One small room was wonderfully enamelled with mother-of-pearl, so that even now it gleamed with brilliant opalescent tints when the light played across it. An ornamented platform of yellow metal and a similar couch lay in one corner, and one felt that it may well have been the bedchamber of a queen, but beside the couch there lay now a loathsome black squid, its foul body rising and falling in a slow, stealthy rhythm so that it seemed like some evil heart which still beat in the very centre of the wicked palace. I was glad, and so, I learned, were my companions, when our guides led the way out once more, glancing for a moment at a ruined amphitheatre and again at a pier with a lighthouse at the end, which showed that the city had been a seaport. Soon we had emerged from these places of ill omen and were out on the familiar bathybian plain once more.

Our adventures were not quite over, for there was one more which was as alarming to our companions as to ourselves. We had nearly made our way home when one of our guides pointed upwards with alarm. Gazing in that direction we saw an extraordinary sight. Out of the black gloom of the waters a huge, dark figure was emerging, falling rapidly downwards. At first it seemed a shapeless mass, but as it came more clearly into the light we could see that it was the dead body of a monstrous fish, which had burst so that the entrails were streaming up behind it as it fell. No doubt the gases had buoyed it up in the higher reaches of the ocean until, having been released by putrefaction or by the ravages of sharks, there was nothing left but dead weight, which sent it hurtling down to the bottom of the sea. Already in our walk we had observed several of these great skeletons picked clean by the fish, but this creature was still, save for its disembowelment, even as it had lived. Our guides seized us with the intention of dragging us out of the path of the falling mass, but presently they were reassured and stood still, for it was clear that it would miss us. Our vitrine helmets prevented our hearing the thud, but it must have been prodigious when that huge body struck the floor of the ocean, and we saw the Globigerina ooze fly up into the air as the mud splashes when a heavy stone is hurled into it. It was a sperm whale, some seventy feet long, and from the excited and joyful gestures of the submarine folk I gathered that they would find plenty of use for the spermaceti and the fat. For the moment, however, we left the derelict creature, and with joyful hearts, for we unpractised visitors were weary and aching, we found

ourselves once more in front of the engraved portal of the roof, and finally standing safe and sound, divested of our vitrine bells, on the sloppy floor of the entrance chamber.

A few days—as we reckon time—after the occasion when we had given the community a cinema view of our own proceedings, we were present at a very much more solemn and august exhibition of the same sort, which gave us in a clear and wonderful way the past history of this remarkable people. I cannot flatter myself that it was given entirely on our behalf, for I rather think that the events were publicly rehearsed from time to time in order to carry on the record, and that the part to which we were admitted was only some intermezzo of a long religious ceremony. However that may be, I will describe it exactly as it occurred.

We were led to the same great hall or theatre where Dr. Maracot had thrown our own adventures upon the screen. There the whole community was assembled, and we were given, as before, places of honour in front of the great luminous screen. Then, after a long song, which may have been some sort of patriotic chant, a very old white-haired man, the historian or chronicler of the nation, advanced amid much applause to the focus point and threw upon the bright surface before him a series of pictures to represent the rise and fall of his own people. I wish I could convey to you their vividness and drama. My two companions and I lost all sense of time and place, so absorbed were we in the contemplation, while the audience was moved to its depths and groaned or wept as the tragedy unfolded, which depicted the ruin of their fatherland, the destruction of their race.

In the first series of scenes we saw the old continent in its glory, as its memory had been handed down by these historical records passed from fathers to sons. We had a bird's-eye view of a glorious rolling country, enormous in extent, well watered and cleverly irrigated, with great fields of grain, waving orchards, lovely streams and woody hills, still lakes and occasional picturesque mountains. It was studded with villages and covered with farmhouses and beautiful private residences. Then our attention was carried to the capital, a wonderful and gorgeous city upon the sea-shore, the harbour crammed with galleys, her quays piled with merchandise, and her safety assured by high walls with towering battlements and circular moats, all on the most gigantic scale. The houses stretched inland for many miles, and in the centre of the city was a crenellated castle or citadel, so widespread and commanding that it was like some creation of a dream. We were then shown the faces of those who lived in that golden age, wise and venerable old men, virile warriors, saintly priests, beautiful and dignified women, lovely children, an apotheosis of the human race.

THEN came pictures of another sort. We saw wars, constant wars, war by land and war by sea. We saw naked and defenceless races trampled down and overridden by great chariots or the rush of mailed horsemen. We saw treasures heaped upon the victors, but even as the riches increased the faces upon the screen became more animal and more cruel. Down, down they sank from one generation to another. We were shown signs of lascivious dissipation or moral degeneracy, of the accretion of matter and decline of spirit. Brutal sports at the expense of others had taken the place of the manly exercises of old. There was no longer the quiet and simple family life, nor the cultivation of the mind, but we had a glimpse of a people who were restless and shallow, rushing from one pursuit to another, grasping ever at pleasure, for ever missing it, and yet imagining always that in some more complex and unnatural form it might still be found. There had arisen on the one hand an over-rich class who sought only sensual gratification, and on the other hand an over-poor residue whose whole function in life was to minister to the wants of their masters, however evil those wants might be.

And now once again a new note was struck. There were reformers at work who were trying to turn the nation from its evil ways, and to direct it back into those higher paths which it had forsaken. We saw them, grave and earnest men, reasoning and pleading with the people, but we saw them scorned and jeered at by those whom they were trying to save. Especially we could see that it was the priests of Baal, priests who had gradually allowed forms and show and outward ceremonies to take the place of unselfish spiritual development, who led the opposition to the reformers. But the latter were not to be bullied or browbeaten. They continued to try for the salvation of the people, and their faces assumed a graver and even a terror-inspiring aspect as those of men who had a fearsome warning to give which was like some dreadful vision before their own minds. Of their auditors some few seemed to heed and be terrified at the words, but others turned away laughing and plunged ever deeper into their morass of sin. There came a time at last when the reformers turned away also as men who could do no more, and left this degenerate people to its fate.

Then we saw a strange sight. There was one reformer, a man of singular strength of mind and body, who gave a lead to all the

others. He had wealth and influence and powers, which latter seemed to be not entirely of this earth. We saw him in what seemed to be a trance, communing with higher spirits. It was he who brought all the science of his land—science which far outshone anything known by us moderns—to the task of building an ark of refuge against the coming troubles. We saw myriads of workmen at work, and the walls rising while crowds of careless citizens looked on and made merry at such elaborate and useless precautions. We saw others who seemed to reason with him and to say to him that if he had fears it would be easier for him to fly to some safer land. His answer, so far as we could follow it, was that there were some who must be saved at the last moment, and that for their sake he must remain in the new Temple of safety. Meanwhile he collected in it those who had followed him, and he held them there, for he did not himself know the day nor the hour, though forces beyond mortal had assured him of the coming fact. So when the ark was ready and the water-tight doors were finished and tested, he waited upon doom, with his family, his friends, his followers, and his servants.

And doom came. It was a terrible thing even in a picture. God knows what it could be like in reality. We first saw a huge sleek mountain of water rise to an incredible height out of a calm ocean. Then we saw it travel, sweeping on and on, mile after mile, a great glistening hill, topped with foam, at an ever-increasing rate. Two little chips tossing among the snowy fringe upon the summit became, as the wave rolled towards us, a couple of shattered galleys. Then we saw it strike the shore and sweep over the city, while the houses went down before it like a field of corn before a tornado. We saw the folk upon the house-tops glaring out at the approaching death, their faces twisted with horror, their eyes staring, their mouths contorted, gnawing at their hands and gibbering in an insanity of terror. The very men and women who had mocked at the warning were now screaming to Heaven for mercy, grovelling with their faces on the ground, or kneeling with frenzied arms raised in wild appeal. There was no time now to reach the ark, which stood beyond the city, but thousands dashed up to the Citadel, which stood upon higher ground, and the battlement walls were black with people. Then suddenly the Castle began to sink. Everything began to sink. The water had poured down into the remote recesses of the earth, the central fires had expanded it into steam, and the very foundations of the land were blown apart. Down went the city and ever down, while a cry went up from ourselves and the audience at the terrible sight. The pier broke in two and vanished. The high Pharus collapsed under the waves. The roofs looked for a while like successive reefs of rock forming lines of spouting breakers until they, too, went under. The Citadel was left alone upon the surface, like some monstrous ship, and then it also slid sideways down into the abyss, with a fringe of helpless waving hands upon its summit. The awful drama was over, and an unbroken sea lay across the whole continent, a sea which bore no life upon it, but which among its huge smoking swirls and eddies showed all the wrack of the tragedy tossed hither and thither, dead men and animals, chairs, tables, articles of clothing, floating hats and bales of goods, all bobbing and heaving in one huge liquid fermentation. Slowly we saw it die away, and a great wide expanse as smooth and bright as quicksilver, with a murky sun low on the horizon, showed us the grave of the land that God had weighed and found wanting.

THE story was complete. We could ask for no more, since our own brains and imagination could supply the rest. We realized the slow remorseless descent of that great land lower and lower into the abyss of the ocean amid volcanic convulsions which threw up submarine peaks around it. We saw it in our mind's eye stretched out, over miles of what was now the bed of the Atlantic, the shattered city lying alongside of the ark of refuge in which the handful of nerve-shattered survivors were assembled. And then finally we understood how these had carried on their lives, how they had used the various devices with which the foresight and science of their great leader had endowed them, how he had taught them all his arts before he passed away, and how some fifty or sixty survivors had grown now into a large community, which had to dig its way into the bowels of the earth in order to get room to expand. No library of information could make it clearer than that series of pictures and the inferences which we could draw from them. Such was the fate, and such the causes of the fate, which overwhelmed the great land of Atlantis. Some day far distant, when this bathybian ooze has turned to chalk, this great city will be thrown up once more by some fresh expiration of Nature, and the geologist of the future, delving in the quarry, will exhume not flints nor shells, but the remains of a vanished civilization and the traces of an old-world catastrophe.

Only one point had remained undecided, and that was the length of time since the tragedy had occurred. Dr. Maracot

As in Egypt and in Yucatan, the practice of mummifying had been usual, and in niches were endless rows of these grim relics.

discovered a rough method of making an estimate. Among the many annexes of the great building there was one huge vault, which was the burial-place of the chiefs. As in Egypt and in Yucatan, the practice of mummifying had been usual, and in niches in the walls there were endless rows of these grim relics of the past. Manda pointed proudly to the next one in the succession, and gave us to understand that it was specially arranged for himself.

"If you take an average of the European kings," said Maracot, in his best professorial manner, "you will find that they run to about five in the century. We may adopt the same figure here. We cannot hope for scientific accuracy, but it will give us an approximation. I have counted the mummies, and they are four hundred in number."

"Then it would be eight thousand years?"

"Exactly. And this agrees to some extent with Plato's estimate. It certainly occurred before the Egyptian written records begin, and they go back between six and seven thousand years from the present date. Yes, I think we may say that our eyes have seen the reproduction of a tragedy which occurred at least eight thousand years ago. But, of course, to build up such a civilization as we see the traces of must in itself have taken many thousands of years.

"Thus," he concluded—and I pass the claim on to you—"we have extended the horizon of ascertained human history as no men have ever done since history began."

IT was about a month, according to our calculations, after our visit to the buried city that the most amazing and unexpected thing of all occurred. We had thought by this time that we were immune to shocks and that nothing new could really stagger us, but this actual fact went far beyond anything for which our imagination might have prepared us.

It was Scanlan who brought the news that something momentous had happened. You must realize that by this time we were, to some extent, at home in the great building; that we knew where the common rest rooms and recreation rooms were situated; that we attended concerts (their music was very strange and elaborate) and theatrical entertainments, where the unintelligible words were translated by very vivid and dramatic gestures; and that, speaking generally, we were part of the community. We visited various families in their own private rooms, and our lives—I can speak for my own, at any rate—were made the brighter by the glamour of these strange people, especially of that one dear young lady whose name I have already mentioned. Mona was the daughter of one of the leaders of the tribe, and I found in his family a warm and kindly welcome which rose above all differences of race or language. When it comes to the most tender language of all, I did not find that there was so much between old Atlantis and modern America. I guess that what would please a Massachusetts girl of Brown's College is just about what would please my lady under the waves.

But I must get back to the fact that Scanlan came into our room with news of some great happening.

"Say, there is one of them just blown in, and he's that excited that he clean forgot to take his glass lid off, and he was jabbering for some minutes before he understood that no one could hear him. Then it was Blah Blah Blah as long as his breath would hold, and they are all following him now to the jumping-off place. It's me for the water, for there is sure something worth our seeing."

Running out, we found our friends all hurrying down the corridor with excited gestures, and we, joining the procession, soon formed part of the crowd who were hurrying across the sea bottom, led by the excited messenger. They drove along at a rate which made it no easy matter for us to keep up, but they carried their electric lanterns with them, and even though we fell behind we were able to follow the gleam. The route lay as before, along the base of the basalt cliffs until we came to a spot where a set of steps, concave from long usage, led up to the top. Ascending these, we found ourselves in broken country, with many jagged pinnacles of rock and deep crevasses which made it difficult travelling. Emerging from this tangle of ancient lava, we came out on a circular plain, brilliant in the phosphorescent light, and there in the very centre of it lay an object which set me gasping. As I looked at my companions I could see from their amazed expression how fully they shared my emotion.

Half embedded in the slime there lay a good-sized steamer. It was tilted upon its side; the funnel had broken and was hanging at a strange angle, and the foremast had snapped short off, but otherwise the vessel was intact and as clean and fresh as if she had just left the dock. We hurried towards her and found ourselves under the stern. You can imagine how we felt when we read the name "*Stratford*, London." Our ship had followed ourselves into the Maracot Deep.

(*To be concluded.*)

SYBIL THORNDIKE – By Her Brother

THE ROMANTIC LIFE-STORY OF OUR GREATEST ACTRESS

By
RUSSELL THORNDIKE

The first instalment, a most vivid and delightful story of child-life, showed how the instinct for the stage was present, even in her nursery days, in the very spirit of the great Artiste who was destined in the course of time to thrill the world in such a part as that of "St. Joan."

2.—THEATRICAL BEGINNINGS.

SYBIL'S early ambitions were in music, and she made considerable progress in piano-playing, which she studied at the Guildhall School of Music, until an affection in her wrist compelled her to give it up. I had already made up my mind that I was not fitted for a career in the Church which father had decided upon for me, and I shall never forget Sybil's arriving home one day, after a long day's study in London, and finding me in the garden. She burst out: "I'm ready to chuck music as a profession, Russ, and go on the stage with you, if you are still keen."

I could see she had been crying, or, at any rate, had been feeling pretty bad about it, so I tried to restrain my joy, and just said: "Oh, it's just the wrist bothering you again. Why not have a rest, and then ask father to let you go abroad and study with someone in Germany for a change?"

Age 21.

"No," she said; "I've realized I'm not good enough. If I work and work and work, I'll never be as good as I want to be, and it's not fair to keep on taking fees from father and mother, and I ought to earn more. And if we do it together we'll enjoy it frightfully, and I can chuck all my music pupils—hurrah!—then my temper will improve, because it's a curse as it is."

I said nothing, but looked a lot. Sybil was rather violent; we all admitted that, and we always noticed she was in a far nicer frame of mind when she was acting. She has told me since that she thinks acting as a profession has probably saved her life, and the lives of her family, as her impulses to murder were getting more frequent till she resolved to change her profession.

"Well, come on," I said. "Let's tackle parents, and thank Heaven I needn't go to Oxford."

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So we seized mother first of all, and made her understand that if she could screw up funds for a dramatic school we'd work till we dropped, and would pay back everything. Sybil said: "Don't tell father yet; he may get discouraged at my giving up the musical profession, and think that I may be just as bad on the stage as I am at the piano." We got a newspaper and read advertisements of Schools of Acting, till we came to "Ben Greet's Academy."

"Well, we know he's a darling, don't we?" said Sybil. "Because Russ and I followed him home once, about a year ago, from Chatham Theatre, with two people in his company, and he looked sweet. And he's awfully keen on church—we've found that out too." (We had seen Ben Greet act in Chatham Theatre, and also in pastoral plays, and we thought him grand.)

Accordingly, mother wrote to the Ben Greet Academy, and an interview was arranged with Frederic Topham, who ran the show when Ben Greet was away in America. Sybil and mother went to see him, and he told Sybil he couldn't possibly say if she had any talent unless she came to the school, and he'd tell at the end of the half-term if it was going to be any use her taking up acting as a profession.

"She looks as if she can act," said dear little Topham. "Is the boy like her?"

"Oh, no," said Sybil at once. "He's much more frightening—he can really make your flesh creep."

"There's something more in acting than that," was his answer.

Father was now taken into our confidence. He was not as sanguine as mother; at least, father didn't jump wildly at things as we did, but we showed him Sybil's difficulties about her wrist; and that she'd certainly go mad if she only did teaching, without any hope of herself becoming a great pianist; and that I hated the idea of being a parson, and it would cost father a lot sending me to Oxford; and that this way I'd be able to earn money quicker and always look after Sybil—and look what a good man Ben Greet was.

"All right," said father. "We may as well have a shot at it." He was a sport, was father.

We joined the Academy that autumn. How we lived through those summer holidays I don't know. We rearranged our lives and made plans never to marry, but to take a travelling company round the world, and show people what really terrifying acting could be. We went through all our scenes together; we re-stirred up the village boys into wildly enthusiastic "supers" and "small-parters." Eileen and Frank, our sister and brother, were made to play every conceivable part—and all this to work off our superabundant excitement. I often think what an undeveloped pair we were, Sybil and I. At eighteen she wasn't anything of a young lady—she always kept something of a tomboy, and to get her to dress decently was a Herculean task for poor mother, who had a great fancy for pretty clothes.

WE JOIN THE BEN GREET ACADEMY.

SEPTEMBER dawned, and up we both journeyed to the Ben Greet Academy. We put on all the airs we could, but were far too excited to keep them going. We gingerly opened the studio door, to find a class already in progress. "Twelfth Night" was being studied, and we trembled in our shoes at the amazing talent being displayed. Duncan Yarrow, of "Old Vic" fame, was disporting himself as the Duke, and frightfully good he was. "He's miles better than you," Sybil whispered to me, "and that girl as Viola beats me hollow. I wish we hadn't come."

"Buck up," I whispered back. "Remember the Vigilists."

("The Vigilists" was a club we had started, having for our banner the picture of "The Vigilist" kneeling in front of the altar, with his sword before him, and our motto was, "Ora et labora." There were only two members—Sybil and I!)

At that moment we were both taken notice of. Sybil was dragged forth to perform Fabian, and I to enact one Curio who hunts the hart. We came off rather well, I fancied. Sybil was awfully professional; she made me feel rather hot. She developed a laugh as Fabian which I'd never heard her use before. "Where on earth did you pick up that laugh?" I whispered to her, in a pause.

"It came to me in a flash," she answered, "and when I'd done it once it made me roar so much that I went on. And if you were to do Sir Toby, Russ, I've thought of a terribly funny hiccup you can do"—but here we were recalled to the scene, and started all over again. As a matter of fact, I was given Toby at the next rehearsal, and the hiccup came in very useful—anyway, it always made Sybil laugh whenever I did it.

After the rehearsal Topham had some talk with us about our ambitions. It seemed to tickle him rather—our cocksureness—but he only said: "That's the spirit. Work hard and you'll do what you want in time." At the next rehearsal the girl playing Viola didn't know her words, and Topham turned to Sybil and said, "You go and play that scene. Do you know the words?"

"Yes," said Sybil. "We played it in the barn at home."

We seized mother first and made her understand that if she'd screw up funds for a dramatic school we'd work till we dropped.

"Go on, then," said he. "See what you can do. Give us a bit of the barn." After she'd finished the scene, he said: "Now just do that straight through again."

So Duncan Yarrow and she strove through the "Patience on a monument" scene again, and Topham turned to the class and said: "That was as well played by these two young people as I've ever seen it played." She and Duncan looked at each other—of course, by rights they should have fallen in love with each other then and there, but I think they said "Coo!" or "Crums!" or some such expression of incredulity.

However, to cut a long story short, Sybil made great progress—we both made great progress, doing all the things you do do in dramatic schools—playing every sort of part with violent enthusiasm, and feeling no one has ever played any of the parts quite so well.

TRAGEDY *v.* CLOWNING.

WHEN mother came for the verdict at the end of the half-term, Topham said that we'd got the stage instinct all right and it would be a thousand pities not to follow it up. "The girl has great gifts, I think," he told mother; "especially in character and comedy. I see no tragic quality. The boy is harder to judge. He's odd and unexpected; I think he should be a clown." I was very pleased at this, but Sybil, of course, picked on the one thing Topham said she couldn't do.

"I can do tragedy," she said to me in the train going home. "It's tragedy I'm best in, really. I feel so perfectly awful myself sometimes that I must be able to act it."

"Oh, much more fun being clowns," I said. "Tragedy is always so solemn."

"No, it's not," she answered. "It's something much bigger than solemn. When a thing's solemn I laugh, but tragedy is too awful to laugh at."

"Oh, well," I said, "if it's awful, you'll do it all right; but I don't see you being solemn and soulful."

"Soulful!" she yelled at me. "I *hate* soulful! Tragedy is nothing to do with soulful."

"Well, what is it, then?" I demanded.

"I can't possibly explain," she said.

" Tragedy is something you know or you don't know—and that's what I'm going to be—tragic. So now shut up."

" All right," thought I to myself. " You might just as well have been matey and character-comedy-clown like me—but, no, you must go off and be something on your own." So I never spoke to her for the rest of the journey, though I don't think she noticed anything, being far too absorbed in her own selfish ambitions.

Two terms and a half passed by ; Sybil and I were in Heaven—it was one of the happiest years of our lives. Classes two days a week, and we always manœuvred a theatre on one of them—standing in pit and gallery queues, waiting outside the stage-door to see the favourite walk out.

We went on preparing hard for the public performance at the end of the term, at which we were told Ben Greet was to be present. We were to play Pinero's " Cabinet Minister " for that performance : Sybil in the Mrs. John Wood part of Lady Twombley and I in some ridiculous comedy part—and when, some weeks before this great happening, we were told that Ben Greet was going to do a pastoral play, " As You Like It," and that Sybil was going to play Phœbe and I was to be William, our joy knew no bounds. We felt great chances were at hand, and all we had to do was to work like blazes.

Ben Greet arrived home ; a rehearsal was called for the pastoral play, and we went, with knees knocking together, so excited were we. Sybil's pleasure was nearly wrecked by mother's wanting her to wear a silk frock and hat to match with feathers.

" If you put a feather near me," Sybil said, " I sha'n't be able to act at all. I won't be able to do a thing if I don't go in my ordinary everyday clothes."

I told her it was a pity, as now she was a real actress, and ought to put on the sort of things we liked to see actresses dressed in when they came out of the stage-door at the Chatham Theatre.

" Yes, I know," she said. " I like to see actressy-looking people, especially actressy-looking leading ladies, but if I do it myself something in me stops being able to act at all ; so I shall wear my old clothes that no one notices, so there." Same old fault again, you see ; it persists to this day. Poor old Sybil !

ANOTHER USE FOR CRUDEN.

WE rehearsed in the old Bedford Street room, and for the first time met a company of real professionals. We enjoyed hearing them do their bits and listening to the stage gossip which made us feel so professional. A girl called Dora Hole was the leading lady, very clever and brilliant, but we lost touch with her later on and she never seemed to achieve the position we all imagined she would.

Ben Greet took Sybil through her bits very carefully, and said : " You'll be all right if you don't bounce too much. You come on the stage now as if you were going to do a song and dance. You'd better try walking with a book on your head, then you'll learn to balance yourself better." Till the day of performance Sybil walked about with Hooker or Cruden's " Concordance " on her head, and so acquired the right amount of dignity necessary for Phœbe. How we enjoyed that first pastoral play in someone's private garden in Surrey ! Several other students were in the show too, and we were all sent to the servants' hall to have tea, and felt we were real strolling players ; and all went home in brakes, Ben Greet saying as we parted : " Mind you play your parts well to-morrow. I'm going to watch you very carefully."

" The Cabinet Minister " took place next day, and after the performance our fate was to be decided. Sybil and I peeped through the curtain at the end, and saw " B. G." in close " confab." with father and mother. We hardly dared to breathe, but at last, after removing our make-up, we were called and the verdict was given.

" Would you like to come to America with me ? " Ben Greet said to Sybil.

" Oh, I'd adore it," said Sybil. " Thank you very much."

" Here, steady ! " he said. " It's not to be decided in such a hurry. Talk it over with your parents and let me know in a week. As for you, young man," he went on, turning to me, " you're not old enough for any job I can give you in the American company, but I'll find you a place in ' The Eternal City ' tour here, under Bannister Howard, and next year, if you are good, you can come and join your sister." We merely grinned with joy, and arrangements were made then and there for me to join " The Eternal City " Company, with Lewin Mannering and Helen Haye as the leading people, and Sybil was left to talk over the future with father and mother.

REAL "PROS" AT LAST.

THERE was much argument for the next few days, but it was clearly seen that Sybil had determined to go, and that all reasons against her going would be swept away. Finally, it was decided that she was to sail for the United States with Ben Greet on August 24th, and I was to join the Bannister Howard Company just before. During the waiting time, instead of a holiday, we were both offered

small parts in a tour that Ben Greet was organizing for the performance of pastoral plays, which was very lucky for us and enabled us to keep ourselves and learn a lot before we started our big job.

This was a very fine company, with Matheson Lang as leading man and Helen Haye and Hutin Britton as leading ladies, Nigel Playfair, May Martin (who became his wife later on, and was a most attractive boyish actress), Eric Blind, Frank Darch,

Sybil paled—she never has had my love of the small creatures of the earth. She said : " I don't think I'll mind bugs, if there are no beetles. I shall soap myself all over ; then they'll stick ; I can't bear them racing about all over me."

However, I persuaded her to be calm, as I was only pulling her leg, and all was well, and our lodging beautifully clean.

Sybil got into a frightful row at the performance of " The Palace of Truth."

" Would you like to come to America ? " Ben Greet said to Sybil.
" Oh, I'd adore it," said Sybil. " Thank you very much."

Cyril Cattley, and others. The first play was a comedy in two acts, called " My Lord from Town," by Mr. Paul, and Sybil was suddenly jumped into a perfectly lovely part for her *début* as a professional, playing opposite to Matheson Lang in a part nearly as good as the leading lady's, Hutin Britton. These two were so kind to her and helped her so much that she made quite a little success at the performance, which took place in the grounds of Worcester College, Cambridge. How we revelled in that tour ! We had never been to professional digs, and the friendly landladies made us feel we did really belong to the profession.

I said to Sybil, as we sailed into our Cambridge lodgings—very meagre and small —" I think there are always creatures in the beds in professional lodgings. I've read so. I hope we find some, as I've never seen one."

She was enjoying her small part so much that she never bothered about the audience at all. " You don't wait for one of your laughs, or for anyone else's," yelled the unhappy stage-manager, Cyril Cattley. " For goodness' sake, don't spoil other people's shows, if you spoil your own."

Sybil said to me, " I can't *stand* audiences. Just as I'm thoroughly enjoying myself they must go and interrupt and laugh or something—it's too sickening."

I told her gently that the audience was the most important part of the theatre, and that we and all other good actors were the servants of that audience.

" I'm not," she said. " I do it because I want to do it, and to earn my living. I don't care a bit for any of the faces sitting in front."

" You've got a lot to learn," I said to her.

" So have you," she retorted, " and you'll miss your cue if you don't look out. Go on," and she shoved me on the stage just in time for my brave bit of walking-on.

This has always been a great argument between us—this use of audiences. Sybil maintains they must take what they are given and be thankful. I say to her : " But they pay, and they expect to get something they like when they pay good money."

" Nonsense," says my arrogant sister. " Their bit of money doesn't pay for what we give them. If they give as much as *we* give—all of themselves—then they'll get back something worth having."

" Well, then," I go on, determined to floor her, " what do they pay their money for ? "

" For gambling," she says. " They plunk down their ten-and-sixpence, or their half-crown, and risk getting something back. If they lose, well, it's no more than they lose horse-racing. You don't get anything by just paying money for it ; you've got to do something yourself."

We did about a month traipsing the country, playing in college grounds, private grounds, grounds of castles, and all sorts of grounds, living as cheaply as we could on our very meagre pay, and thrilled that our great tours were just about to begin. Sybil was in a great state of excitement at the idea of going to America, as she had always longed to travel, and here was another proof of her theory, " When you want to do a thing, sooner or later you do it." There was a lot of fuss getting her clothes together, which interested mother but worried Sybil. A friend was found in the person of Daisy Robinson, Ben Greet's niece, a girl just about Sybil's age, who was also joining the company. Many were the plans the two mothers made for the two girls, who were to live together and face the difficulties of a strange country together, and life seemed to them both a very thrilling affair. Daisy had had quite a lot of experience of stage life, having grown up in the atmosphere of the profession. Mother felt quite safe, knowing that she would keep Sybil from the pitfalls which our kind friends told us were just waiting to entrap " the innocent girl."

It was queer, Sybil says, that neither father nor mother told her anything of the seamy side of life, which so many modern folk insist on being put before young people making their plunge alone into the world. They told her of no dangers and explained nothing of the difficulties that are supposed to arise in every girl's life. On the last evening, when the family had all come to Euston to give Sybil a farewell dinner and see her off to Glasgow, thence to America, father did say to her : " Sybil, is there anything you would like to ask us about ? Anything you don't understand ? "

And Sybil answered : " No, thank you, father. I understand everything quite well." But I often think, from what Sybil has told me, how extraordinary it is that one as green and as hot-headed as Sybil should have waltzed through those first years without disaster. Father used to say afterwards it was sure knowledge with him that Sybil would always be all right that made him feel there was no necessity to tell her any facts of life, and that when it was necessary for her to know she would know from her own instinct and would find out when the time came. I think there is something in this—so does Sybil. She says if they'd filled her mind with fears, she'd have been thinking out ways of circumventing dangers, instead of disregarding them and thinking out more interesting things.

OFF TO THE U.S.A.

WE saw her off that night. I was in the midst of rehearsals for my tour, and I brought along a lot of actory-looking people to impress Sybil, and to cheer her on her way. It was great fun watching the company arrive, two of whom she'd met before—Frank Darch and Eric Blind, who became her stanch friends. The leading lady was Constance Crawley. Her husband (we always called him Master Rawdon) became a sort of elder brother to us and our family ever since. Leonard Shepherd and his wife—always our good pals—Percival Aylmer Harris (now Major on the Government staff in Jerusalem), and a whole lot more. There is an atmosphere about the first company one works with that one never meets again—a sort of comradeship that they extend to a beginner that is very sweet and jolly, and robs the launching of half its home-sickness.

A jolly send-off they all had that night, and we hugged Sybil and told her to brisk up and make a name ; and I said, " Vigilists for ever, and don't forget to frighten everyone stiff by your acting." And she said nothing at all, but looked bright-eyed and thrilled, as if she was off on a sort of adventure that no one had ever been before. I've often thought how typical this is of Sybil. She always suggests, whatever she's doing, that it's the most exciting thing that ever has been done, and that no one in the world had ever thought of doing before.

Life is a continual surprise to her. She lives most of the time at very high pitch. Some people find her exhausting, while others are stimulated.

The whistle blew, and off she went. Ben Greet had told father and mother that he

would take care of her, and mother said to Sybil as she got into the carriage: "He's a darling; you must try very hard to please him, because he's got such a sweet face," which I thought an absurd remark, but so like mother.

We went back to the Euston Hotel for the night, feeling a little saddened and quiet, but, as I said to father and mother, "You've got your son-and-heir at home, haven't you?—with a glorious career ahead of him, so don't put all your eggs in Sybil's basket. She can look after herself all right, don't you worry. I know that girl better than any of you."

I said: "Don't forget to frighten everyone by your acting."

That cheered them up a bit and stopped them wondering whether they'd done right or wrong. "Because," as I said to them, "it's no good wondering or regretting now it's done, and Sybil does what she wants in the end, always, whether you plan this way or that."

And they said: "Don't be hard, Russell; she's a very sweet, gentle girl, and we don't want her to be knocked over by life."

But I only said: "Aha, you don't know our Sybil. She's the sort of sweet and gentle that will give them all one in the eye if she doesn't get what she wants."

Mother said: "I think Russell must be overtired; he is saying rather bitter things about Sybil." I only giggled weakly, knowing that Sybil would have yelled uproariously at the conversation.

LETTERS FROM ABROAD.

WE never saw her for over a year, but she wrote reams every day—some letters I kept, and as we were turning out father's papers after his death we came upon a whole heap she had written him during that year. He'd kept them all carefully.

It seems, when the train left Euston station, Sybil and Daisy both looked at each other, and Sybil said: "Don't cry, Daisy," and Daisy said: "Don't cry, Sybil," and Ben Greet put his nose into the carriage and said: "Well, you two little duffers, what are you crying for?" And they all had a good howl and a good laugh, and felt better.

Here is a letter of Sybil's which she wrote and posted just before the ship sailed:—

". . . I've never felt so excited in my life—it's glorious. We all bundled out early in the morning at Glasgow, after having slept quite a lot during the night—we all had pillows, you see, and with our rugs we were very cosy—and I felt so hungry I nearly died of it. We drove across Glasgow in a special bus, and then went by train to Greenock, where we saw our ship, the *Numidian*. It's a lovely morning; the ship doesn't look very large: I suppose she's all right; she's not as big as the ships Uncle Jim sends off—but we've just had the best breakfast I can remember. B. G. paid for Daisy and me, 'for luck,' he said—wasn't it decent of him? Heavenly bloaters

with soft roes, tons of toast and tea and marmalade. B. G. said, 'Is this your usual appetite? Because you'll have to be careful not to get fat.' I said, 'I'm always hungry in the morning and near the water.' We've just come on board and seen our cabins. I'm not with anyone I know, and there isn't a porthole—it's what they call an inside cabin—but there are three American ladies with me; they seem awfully nice, though how we are ever going to get dressed in the small space I can't think. I don't suppose any of us will ever wash during the whole voyage—it's about three miles to the bathroom, and I loathe washing in bits, don't you? One thing is making me perfectly miserable—we've just seen in a paper that darling Dean Hole has died—won't everybody miss him dreadfully? I can't believe it somehow—but wherever he is now I'm sure he's just as jolly as ever, and he always hated anyone to be blue—so I sha'n't stay miserable for long. Good-bye, angels; there are such a lot of people surging about and the mail will have to go. I'm writing this on the deck as all the writing tables are full and my cabin is so stuffy, so excuse this feeble letter. I'm awfully happy and terribly excited, and we are to swot fearfully hard, and I'm sorry if I've ever been in beastly tempers, I never mean it, and I'll write a bit every day. Hug darling little Turvy for me. I expect he'll miss me. Good-bye, lambs.

"Your loving SYBIL.

"Oh! Good luck, Russ; mind you be wonderful in 'The Eternal City'; even if it's only a tiny part, you be the best in the play."

THAT voyage was a wonderful one to Sybil. She was terribly sea-sick, but Mrs. Crawley was awfully kind to her; in fact, according to Sybil, everybody was awfully kind, and she recovered in a short while and had the time of her life, larking about that ship with its entertainments and dances. It was a very rough voyage, and they took fourteen days to get across, but, as she said in a letter to me:—

"I've loved every minute of it except the sea-sick bit. Ben Greet told me the other day that it was going to be very hard work, and was I a quick study? I said, 'Yes, awfully quick,' and he said, 'Well, you'd better learn everybody's parts, because you never know when you may have to go on.' So I'm starting on 'Hamlet' because I know all 'Twelfth Night' and a good bit of 'As You Like It.' I learn parts first thing after breakfast, when I've had a good walk round the deck—there's Eric Blind and Frank Darch always to go walks with. They are always full of plans about getting into the steerage and sitting in the bows, where you feel the wind best; and there's a killing boy, Percival Aylmer, who makes me roar. He sings very well, though he hasn't got a voice at all—he's rather sarcastic, but I always do like sarcastic people, don't I? Well, then I learn tons of lines—I rather spoilt my new Shakespeare yesterday. It was awfully rough and I was sitting next to a French lady who was eating semolina pudding—we'd had lunch on deck. Suddenly an enormous wave broke the rope by which our chairs were tied, and we all slid to the lee-scuppers—at least, I think they are lee-scuppers—and my Shakespeare and the semolina pudding got all mixed up in them. The French lady shouted out, 'Nous allons,' and so we did. It's rather sickening, as Margy Smith gave me the Shakespeare, and it's a beauty. Semolina pudding and salt water have made it look perfectly awful. We always call the French lady 'Nous Allons' now—she is great fun. A fancy-dress ball was on last night. Leonard Shepherd was best as Monkey Brand—a marvellous make-up. Daisy and he got the prizes. Daisy was a paper parcel, all dressed in brown paper. Awfully good. I didn't get a prize, but my dress was awfully comfy—a peasant in a petticoat and blouse, with a handkerchief round my neck and one round my head. I did an Irish jig in it to the crowd assembled on deck. I enjoyed it awfully. The company did an entertainment too. Scenes from 'Twelfth Night'; they let me be Curio, and I also played the accompaniments for anyone who sang. They all act very well; I'm going to, too, when I get going. Daisy is awfully nice—and she's a very good critic and tells me lots of things I do wrong, which is a great help. . . ."

ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK.

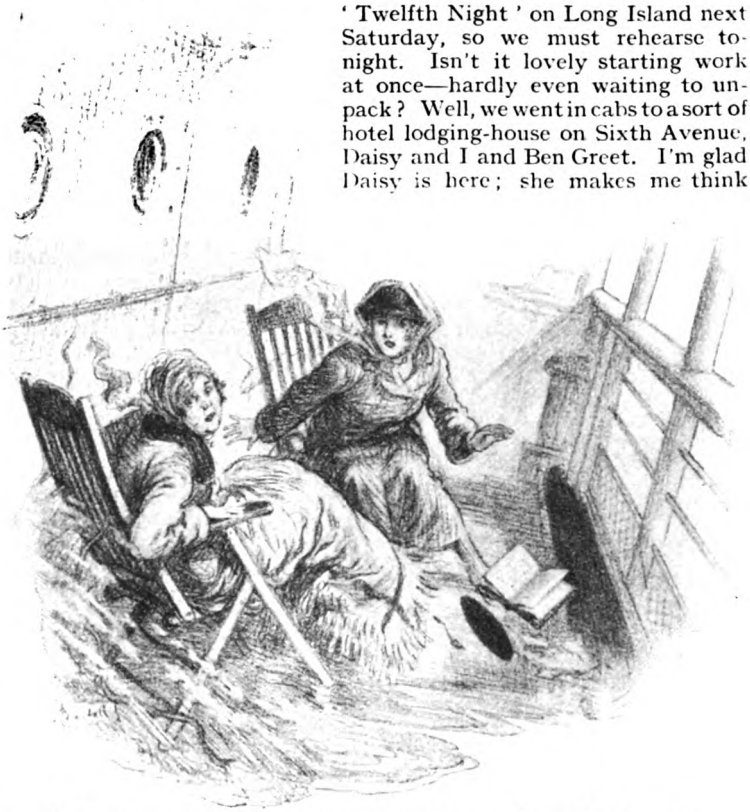
WE'VE got sheets and sheets of note-paper in this strain. Sybil was always voluble on and off paper, and she knew we liked hearing everything about everybody, and herself. Her arrival in New York nearly finished her again. It's lucky she was so strong physically, or she'd not have survived the perpetual state of electric shock. Bits of her letter will explain better than I can:—

"We saw New York early in the morning. We passed Nantucket lighthouse late at night, and all the Americans sang their patriotic songs. I wish you'd been there, Russ; we'd have bawled out 'The British Grenadiers,' wouldn't we? I did bawl them out inside myself, and I told Eric Blind I was singing 'God Save the King'

as well, and he said, 'Splendid: let's sing it out loud,' and we did and all the English people joined in, and a lot of the Americans too, which I thought very jolly of them. My dear, the sky-scrapers are marvellous. I think they look very beautiful, and the Statue of Liberty is splendid You feel that every nation can come to America and earn their livings and have adventures and not worry any more. It's wonderful to see a land that opens its doors to everyone, isn't it? I suppose England does that too, only when one is in a country one doesn't realize it quite the same.

"We took ages going through the Customs. I simply adored the man who turned my trunks upside down—he had the killingest voice—dreadful—and he clicked his teeth like that awful girl at the Brighton cricket week, and he said, 'Got any noooo clothes?' I said, 'Every single thing in my trunk is new. I wouldn't risk having to buy anything here because I've heard it's so expensive.' I felt Daisy give me a hack on the shins, and I suppose I oughtn't to have said I'd got anything new. Then he looked at my hats and said, Say, are these your nooo Sunday hats?' and I said, 'Yes; they're a bit squashed now, but they looked fine when I packed them.' He laughed at another rather huffy man with him and said, I guess you look dandy in the one with scrambled eggs on it'—he meant my buttercup one. I saw he was fooling me, so I said, 'Oh, well, I hate hats anyway, so I don't mind what you do with them.' We went on talking for quite a long time, and the huffy one was rather nice in the end and said my trunks could all be passed.

"Then B. G. came and said we'd got to play a pastoral of 'As You Like It' and 'Twelfth Night' on Long Island next Saturday, so we must rehearse to-night. Isn't it lovely starting work at once—hardly even waiting to unpack? Well, we went in cabs to a sort of hotel lodging-house on Sixth Avenue, Daisy and I and Ben Greet. I'm glad Daisy is here; she makes me think



"Suddenly we all slid to the lee-scuppers, and my Shakespeare and the semolina pudding got all mixed up in them."

things are real and ordinary; I can't help feeling it's all a dream. I keep saying, 'This is me, and I'm in America, a foreign country, and three weeks ago I wasn't here at all.' You know it *is* surprising the way things rush on and happen—one minute you're in one place, and then you're in another, and all the time England is going on just as well whether you're there or not, which I can't believe! We went and had a huge meal at a place called Child's—we call it 'Café l'Enfant,' it sounds more stylish—it's rather like Lyons', only far more thrilling—glorious things to eat—and finishing with peaches cut in slices and cream. I thought I'd never stop, and, my dear, it's awfully cheap.

"Then came the rehearsal in a large room along Sixth Avenue. I adored it. I play Phœbe, only B. G. cut some of her very long speech. I felt rather sick about that until I found he was cutting everyone's part. Oh, then we were told we had to rehearse 'Everyman' next morning—you don't know the play—it's a morality one and simply glorious. I'm going to learn all

the parts because I'd like to play them all. Mrs. Crawley plays Everyman—she's absolutely beautiful, with a lovely voice, and her tears pour down—well, so did mine when she did the big prayer. I'd give anything to be able to play that part. I'm playing Beauty—don't laugh—she's an abstraction, if you know what that is. I shall look ghastly, as I saw the clothes and wig, and about as much like Beauty as darling Mr. Dadson (our gardener). . . .

PLAYING IN "TWELFTH NIGHT."

"THE first pastoral is over and I did enjoy myself. We played 'Twelfth Night' at night—Eric Blind was glorious as the Duke. He's got the most lovely face I've ever seen in my life—don't you think so, too?—not counting father. I did feel Olivia was a fool not to have him instead of that ass Sebastian, who looked awful—not a bit like Mrs. Crawley, who was a lovely Viola—and his wig didn't fit, and I felt like shouting, 'Oh, no one would look at you when there's Orsino.' Of course, Eric Blind has a glorious voice too, and when you get a glorious voice and a glorious face—well, what is there else? Oh, and he's a lovely character, I'm sure, because everyone likes him, and he's always the same, never gets into little tempers like lots of actors seem to. But, all the same, Russ, I don't think he really cares a great deal for acting—he seems to get his enjoyment from something he's thinking about, not from what he's doing; do you know how I mean? And, somehow or other, that's the part of him I like best. . . .

"I played a lady-in-waiting to Olivia—a fearfully uncomfortable dress—very tight in the waist and an Elizabethan collar that pricked. I don't think I looked very nice, though I managed the skirts all right—my hair isn't tidy enough for Elizabethan. Ben Greet said I looked like a rag-bag—he said it under his breath on the stage; it wasn't very encouraging—but another awfully nice woman, Agnes Scott, helped me to make myself better for the next entrance—and there's an awfully kind wardrobe-mistress, called Miss Buckley, who helped me too.

"I played Phœbe in the afternoon. Daisy Robinson said I'd improved, but B. G. didn't say so. He didn't seem to pay much attention to me. He played Touchstone beautifully, and Malvolio too. I like his face—and he has a funny sound in his voice which makes lines appear funny even if they aren't. . . .

"We started going towards the West. I can hardly wait to see California, I've always longed to go there. We are at present in a place called Syracuse—it's awful—the trains come down the main street, and I woke up in the night thinking I was being run over. My dear, it was a train passing just outside my window in the street—an ordinary passenger train going quite fast and ringing a church bell all the time—I'd been thinking how holy the Americans were with so many services, but it was only the trains! It's a most surprising country—but Ben Greet says this is nothing to the lovely surprises I shall have later, when we go right across. We played here twice to-day; yesterday we were in a place called Rochester. I sent you P.C.'s from there because it seemed so wonderful being in another Rochester, and I thought of our own darling Rochester all the time. So pretty it all is—no fences nor walls—all the gardens joining, till it looks as if it were all one garden, and all the houses so friendly with each other—not a bit 'Don't you go looking over my wall to see what I'm doing,' though I always did love high walls. I think perhaps after all high walls are more exciting. However, no walls is a nice change.

SEEING NIAGARA.

"AND now what do you think? Father, you'll be awfully jealous. *We are going to Niagara.* Of course I simply *can't* believe it. We're going to spend the day there, not doing any work even. Isn't Ben Greet a lamb? He must have known it was the one thing I was dying to see in all the world. I can't write any more now because it's breakfast time, and we're going to start to Buffalo—that's the place it's near. Good-bye till we've seen it. . . .

"We've seen it! And we're on the train now going to Chicago, and I feel rather like the child in the Stevenson poem about 'the stars going round in my head'—and I wish I could find some new adjectives, I've used up all the wonderfuls and marvellouses, so when I say them about Niagara you must multiply them by a hundred and sing them like the chorus in the 'Messiah,' '*Wonderful*—*Counsellor*—the Mighty Lord'—you know the one I mean—*that* will make you realize, if you shout it. Going down the street at Niagara Falls (it's a town, you know), just an ordinary street, with shops and people with quite ordinary faces buying, you hear a dull roar. It gives you an awful queer feeling as if something was waiting to jump out on you. I couldn't speak, I was feeling so terrible. It was rather like the feeling before Cæsar makes his entrance, and you feel you won't be able to bear it. Oh,

I *can't* explain it. We saw a huge cloud, and it was spray, just imagine, going up twice as high as the Falls—and then the roar got more and more awful, and we saw Niagara!

"I've never wanted you all so much in my life; it seemed as if I'd no business to be the only one of the family seeing such a sight. You know what it looks like in pictures—well, that's *nothing* to it—it's only the tiniest idea of what it's like, and the more you look and the more you think about it, the more extraordinary you feel. I'm sure it's far better for people than church, because you don't *believe* in God—you know it, Niagara makes you know it. It makes all those books I read with Bulbrooke—Huxley, Grant Allen, and Darwin—all seem rather footling, though I always feel there's more in Darwin than church people say, but I dare say they've all seen Niagara now from where they are, in Purgatory, Heaven, or Paradise, or wherever you say they are, father, and are sorry they said such definite things on earth, though I *like* definite people, even if they contradict themselves next day—what does it matter, anyway?

"Well, to go back to Niagara. We went to the Islands. You absolutely *cross* the Falls, on stepping-stones and unsafe-looking bridges, and you imagine ghastly things, and you think of Captain Webb, and it's funny, I could sort of *see* him struggling in the water, *not* like a man, but like that photo you have of him, father, on your dressing-table, with huge biceps in a vest. Oh, Russ, if only you were here, it would be perfect. Mother, you'd die of it. I roar when I think of your face crossing the bridges, that agonized face you put on when father goes on too long with his sermon, or finishes with: 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'

HAMLET AND NIAGARA.

"BEN GREET wandered about with a 'Hamlet'—he was studying it. I'd love to play Hamlet and learn it at Niagara. I know a good bit of it—but I suppose you'll play it before me, Russ, and I don't think I really look it, though I feel it—only Burbage wasn't thin and was probably healthy too. Ben Greet looked very happy, as if 'Look what I've kept up my sleeve for you'—very nice he is. Oh, Niagara, how gorgeous it all is! I wish I didn't get so hungry. This Niagara day has made me worse. I ate three fried eggs with bacon to match for lunch and everything else corresponding. I saw B. G. look at me very reproachfully and I said to myself, 'I swear I won't eat another meal to-day because I must get to look more poetical.' I've kept it up so far, but it's only because till we got on the train we didn't get a chance of anything to eat. We're on the train now, I'm writing in my bunk. They are asking me now to go into the dining-car and have a meal, and they all seem so jolly. I feel sure I shall go and betray my vow. I'm certain I should be a drunkard if I liked drink, because people are so pally and jolly, and I expect they are in bars. I've not seen any bars but the 'Chequers,' but I adore that—such killing people leaning over it and 'ad a rinse' serving them all with noggins o' rum! I'm going into the dining-car—may as well be matey—so I'll stop this letter. Good night, angels. I'll never forget Niagara—never.

"Your loving SYBIL.

"P.S.—Later. Had an enormous meal. Thoroughly enjoyed it. Two helps of everything and hoped B. G. wouldn't notice. As B. G. walked out of the dining-car he said, 'Old fat Syb.' It made me feel rather depressed."

(*To be continued.*)

The Human Leopard

By

GARNETT RADCLIFFE

Illustrated by
REGINALD CLEAVER

WHEN, on the evening before the big fight, Phil Carver, professional boxer and heavy-weight champion of the world, read in the papers that he was a Human Leopard and the greatest fighter of all time, he felt that he had at last attained the summit of his ambition. It had been a stiff climb. Thirteen years ago he had been an unknown hobbledehoy, helping in his mother's shop during the day and of an evening boxing in a newsboys' club for shilling prizes offered by a sporting parson. Even now he would remember the evening when Bill Herron, prince of middle-weights, had come to the tiny hall to referee the fights and distribute the prizes at the request of his clerical friend. It had been Bill Herron who had spotted him; who had seen in the eighteen-year-old lout with the vast shoulders and sledge-hammer fists the making of a champion. It had been Bill Herron who coached him, trained him, punished him unmercifully on occasions, and finally got him his first fight at the National. From that day to this he had never looked back. Gruelling fight had followed gruelling fight, until at last, still comparatively unknown, he had met the great Mike Leonard himself, and after twelve terrible rounds had wrested from him the blue ribbon of the ring. And now he was champion of the world, the greatest fighter of all time, to whom the once famous Bill Herron was proud to act as trainer.

Five years he had held the title. Five times had ambitious aspirants tried to wrest it from him, and five times had he battered them back into obscurity. Dubois the battling French sailor, Oskar the Scandinavian giant, Darky Joe the negro, Harper the wild cat from Tennessee, Anderson the Australian Terror—each of them in turn he had met and defeated; not ordinary defeats on points either, but terrible maulings, each of which had increased his reputation. And on the morrow he was to meet Dan Maclure the Irish Canadian for the biggest purse that had ever been offered to a prize-fighter, and before the biggest crowd that had ever watched a prize-fight. They were coming to see the Human Leopard box, for the result was a foregone conclusion. The cartoonists in the comic papers were drawing pictures of Dan Maclure getting measured for his coffin.

On the day before the fight he relaxed the strenuous training which he had been undergoing for three months. Just a brisk run, a quarter of an hour's sparring with his fastest partner, and then a rub down from the hands of the most skilful masseur in the world. Gee! How fit he felt! He was a fighting machine oiled and adjusted to the last possible pitch of perfection. He'd give the crowd a treat for their money. . . .

When he had left the masseur Bill Herron inspected him and spoke words of praise and wisdom.

"You're fine. Trained to the last ounce. Better than I've ever seen you before. But for the love of Mike don't get thinkin' about to-morrow. Read a novel, or have a game of billiards, while I think out what to tell the reporters. I'll have the peach of a yarn ready, the way it can be published before they've carried Maclure to his dressing-room."

"I'll look in at the Four in Hand Club," Phil Carver said. He spoke with pride. The fact of his being a member of that famous club showed how far he had travelled since he used to help in his mother's shop.

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ON the way to the Four in Hand he went into a post-office to send a telegram to Clara. Clara was his wife. Before she became his wife she had been an actress, as famous for her beauty as he was for his boxing. She was a peach, a high-stepper, a beautiful creature desired by all men. And he had won her! She was the loveliest and most expensive of all the toys that success had brought him.

"Feeling fine. Fight is a sure thing. Order that necklace from Delawnay, also limousine. Love. Phil." That was what he said in the telegram. By the necklace he meant a fifty-thousand-pound string of pearls for which Clara had longed. What was fifty thousand pounds compared to what he would win upon the morrow? Nothing—less than nothing. Clara could have two necklaces if she liked. Gee! He was a whale of a fellow.

He had been recognized when he entered the post-office, and when he came out a crowd, mostly women, had gathered. They cheered, and he raised his hat in graceful acknowledgment. He felt glad that he was wearing a perfectly-cut new suit. There was someone taking a snapshot. He smiled to show the even white teeth of which he was so proud.

But there was one person among the crowd who did not cheer. He was a huge, shabbily-dressed man with a red, pimply face, bloated by drink. Suddenly, much to Carver's disgust, he lurched forward and held out his hand.

"You ain't too proud to remember me, Phil Carver, are you? Six years ago you was glad enough to meet me. You were a youngster in those days and hadn't learned to be ashamed of your own mother."

Carver made to push past, but something about the shape of the shabby man's nose caught his eye. He remembered that nose. Some incident had fixed it in his memory.

"Mike Leonard!" he cried. "You!" He stared at the broken-down wreck.

"Yes, I'm Mike Leonard—once heavy-weight champion of the world, same as you are to-day. Aye, you can stare at me, Phil Carver, for you'll be like me before long! Mark what I'm saying, for it's Gospel truth. It's a fine life while it lasts, but it don't last long, more's the pity. Some husky boy'll come along and hand it to you same as you handed it to me. Then where'll you be? Them smart friends of yours'll drop you quicker than a hot potato, and you'll find yourself down and out and forgotten with nothing but a taste for champagne to remind you of what you once were. Ah, now, Mr. Carver, don't be minding my nonsense. Could you spare me the price of a drink for the sake of old times?" His voice had suddenly taken on the whine of a professional beggar.

Sick with disgust, Carver pushed a note into the outstretched hand. Then he strode on, trying to forget the disagreeable incident. Why had that ill-omened old fool come across his path just on that particular evening? Speaking of failure, too! Pah! What nonsense! Had not the Press of every country in the world assured him that he was unbeatable—a Human Leopard—the greatest fighter of all time? And he couldn't lose. There was too much at stake. Apart from the prize money, he had backed himself for more than his last penny. Defeat would leave him penniless—worse than penniless, in debt. But why was he worrying? He could beat Dan Maclure with one hand behind his back.

What else had the old drunkard said? Ashamed of his own mother! What rot! Of course he couldn't ask her to Clara's swell parties. Why should he? Anyway, she wouldn't have enjoyed it—she'd have felt out of things with her old-fashioned clothes and her homely ways. She was far happier in her little shop with her humble friends. And he'd given her money—as much as he could after paying for Clara's pleasures. And two years ago he had paid her a visit when Clara had gone on that yachting cruise. True, he hadn't stayed very long, but that was because he didn't like the smell in the shop—not because he was ashamed of her. No, he had no reason to reproach himself on that score. Mike Leonard was jealous; yes, that was it—he was jealous and was trying to crab his victor's success.

BY the time he reached the imposing building of the Four in Hand, Phil Carver had regained his equanimity. The sight of a young lord, bearer of one of the greatest names in England, running down the steps to greet him as though he were a lifelong friend, helped greatly to restore his self-esteem. He wished that Mike Leonard could have seen him at that moment. Oh, shucks! What was he thinking about Mike Leonard for?

"Feeling fit, old man?" The sprig of the aristocracy ran girlish fingers over the prize-fighter's mighty biceps. "That's right—you mustn't lose, you know—we've all backed you to the last bean. Fitz says he'll have to take to a push-bike if you let Maclure last four rounds."

This was fame indeed, thought the ex-shop-boy. So the fortunes of Fitz—Duke of Brooklands he was called by a sportsman-loving public, and he really was a Duke—lay in his hands! Carver felt enormously elated. A vision of Clara and himself being

invited to the ducal mansion floated before his eyes. He spoke with a great assumption of being at ease.

"Reckon the Dook is on to a good thing. I've got Maclure's measure all right, you bet. He's only a rough-house sort of chap with a wallop. He'll be my meat—you see."

Arm in arm with the young Corinthian he passed into the smoking-room. The men there greeted him with acclamations. All the wealthy, well-born patrons of sport seemed to be clustered about him at the same time. But they did not patronize *him*. They hung on his words and were eager to claim him as a friend. And why not? Apart from their money and their names they were nonentities, while he—he was a Human Leopard, and the greatest fighter of all time, even though his mother did keep a shop in Balham.

It was in a glow of contentment that he left the Four in Hand. After all, those titled nobs were just like other men when one knew how to take them. He was sure that they liked him for his own sake, not merely for what he was. Gee! How he'd made them laugh with his stories, especially the motoring Duke who had backed him so heavily. Nice fellow, that Duke! He wouldn't drop a chap like a hot potato just because he happened to lose a fight.

Back in the training quarters he found Bill Herron and his manager radiating confidence. The manager was exuberant.

"I've had private word from Liverpool that Maclure strained his wrist sparring this morning," he announced. "They thought they'd have to call the fight off at first. The odds on you are a hundred to ten, and that's hard to get. Glad I got my little pile on in time! Now, sonny, bed is the place for you. This time to-morrow we'll be throwing up our hats, or I'm a Dutchman."

This time to-morrow! Carver felt a thrill of boyish pleasure as he thought of the good time that was to be his. Clara was coming to see him fight and was bringing a party of her swell friends. There was to be a celebration afterwards; he would be the host—there was no fear of his being too tired. He would have to make a speech which would be broadcast all over the world. And he'd break his training by having a glass of wine, maybe he'd have two glasses. Gee! It was the peach of a fine life! Drop him like a hot potato, indeed! He laughed aloud as he thought of Mike Leonard's words. Then he turned over and slept as peacefully as a little child.

IT was at nine o'clock in the evening that the great fight had been timed to begin. Long before that time the vast hall with its endless tiers of uprising seats had been packed to overflowing. The spectators gave the preliminary contests perfunctory applause; it was to see Phil Carver fight that they had paid their money, and they awaited his coming with impatience. Outside in the street an even vaster crowd waited to hear the verdict, patiently enduring the drizzling rain. And all over the world wireless enthusiasts were listening. The name of Phil Carver was on every lip. Would he knock Maclure out in the first round or in the second?

Close to the ring-side a row of seats had been reserved for Clara and her friends. Peeping from the door of the passage that led to his dressing-room, Carver saw them arrive, and he glowed with pride. What a top-hole crowd they were! Regular nobs! And Clara herself was more radiantly beautiful than ever. She was a high-stepper and no mistake. She was in evening dress, and was wearing the new string of pearls for which he would have to pay fifty thousand pounds on the morrow. Aw, shucks! What did it matter? A fellow like him could afford to give his wife what she wanted. There was nothing cheap about *him*.

At last the moment arrived when Maclure as challenger climbed first into the ring. The crowd applauded him, but without enthusiasm. As yet he was unknown and had but few friends. The crowd liked his pluck in facing the Human Leopard—beyond that they had no interest.

But when Phil Carver appeared they fairly rose at him and thundered their applause. The sound was music in his ears. He would have liked to shake the hand of every individual in that roaring crowd. He felt that they were his friends and that they really liked him. How proud Clara must feel! He smiled at her and she waved back.

As he settled himself upon his stool he looked over to where Maclure sat, nervously fumbling with the tassel of his dressing-gown. The Irish Canadian—he was an ex-lumberman, whose muscles had been hardened by much felling of timber—was a massive, stocky sort of fellow. Carver had met his sort before. Strong as a bull, fearless as a lion, a fighter pure and simple, lacking the finer knowledge of ring-craft. He looked too heavy, as though he'd be on the slow side. Speed, science, and hard hitting would be the way to beat him. Those burly chaps often tired easily.

The gong sounded and the murmur of the crowd died away in a hush of breathless expectancy. According to his wont, Carver opened rather slowly, taking his opponent's measure before he launched his famous whirlwind attack. With lithe ease he

"You ain't too proud to remember me, Phil Carver, are you?"

avoided the Canadian's bull-like rush, and then, always dancing away, he flicked his long left through the other's guard, landing continually upon the face. They were sharp, irritating blows, not doing very serious damage, but blinding Maclure and making him rush wildly. Once, towards the end of the round, Carver saw his opportunity and sent home a savage body blow. It was then he realized for the first time how tough the lumberman really was. His arm was jarred as if he had struck a stone wall. But on the whole he felt satisfied when the gong went for the end of the round. Maclure was just what he looked—a big bruiser, all strength and no science.

In the next round he showed the crowd something of what they had come to see. Like a flash he was across the ring and on Maclure, almost before the stools had been lifted through the ropes. Then he showed them the Human Leopard at his best. With a hurricane of terrific blows he drove the Canadian round the ring, hitting, it seemed, where and how he liked. His supporters rose to their feet and cheered themselves hoarse. This was the sort of attack that had crumpled up Harper the American and Anderson the Australian Terror. History was repeating itself.

But Dan Maclure, although obviously shaken, showed no sign of being crumpled up. With his chin well tucked in and his right ever menacing Carver's ribs he faced the storm bravely. He was a bull, without nerves and insensible to pain. An uncomfortable feeling began to come over Carver. He was hitting with every ounce of his great strength, but his blows seemed to be having surprisingly little effect. What was happening? Were his punches less terrible than of yore? Even he couldn't keep up this pace for long. Making a stupendous effort, he drove Maclure against the ropes with a whirlwind of savage body blows. Now for a knock-out! He sent in a whizzing upper-cut, only to feel his fist jar against an iron shoulder. For his life he could not repeat the effort, so he had to give way.

WHILE he sat in his corner after that round and let the seconds sluice his as yet untouched face with ice-cold water he felt puzzled. His confidence was lessened. Never before had he expended so much strength in a ring and had so little to show for it. Dan Maclure was something out of the ordinary; there was no doubt about it.

Suddenly he heard a new note in the roar of the crowd. It was a note of surprise, almost of consternation. So they had noticed that he was having a rough passage! Pikers! They thought they'd lose their money! Aw! Let them wait a bit, and he'd show them. What was Clara thinking? He stole a sideway glance between two rubs of the sponge. Her face was set and hard, almost cruel. She'd sensed the coming disaster. A great wave of anger rose in Phil Carver's heart. He'd show these fools some fighting!

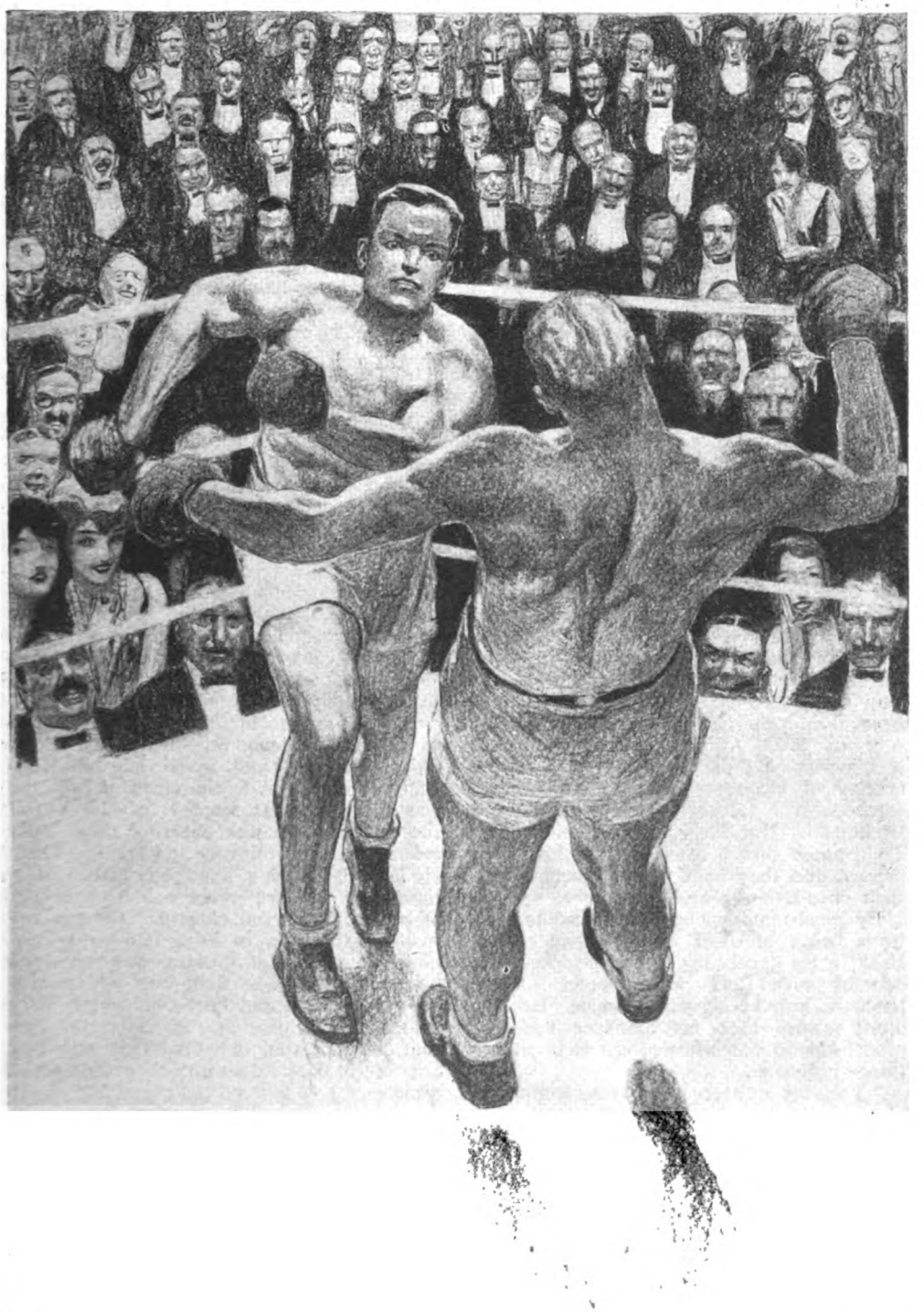
The instant the gong sounded he attacked furiously, striving by sheer speed and hard hitting to drive Maclure against the ropes. But the Canadian's blood was up and he met the Human Leopard half-way, taking the punishment grimly, his great fists driving like pistons. For some seconds both men fought for all they knew in the centre of the ring. Carver was the first to give way. He knew that despite his splendid training and vast strength he could not endure those appalling welts for long. He danced away and retreated round the ring, again using his long stinging left. Maclure followed fiercely, disregarding the punishment and crashing down Carver's guard with his savage swings. Twice he landed in the same place, over the heart, and then while Carver was still dazed he sent over an upper-cut that should have ended the fight. It missed the chin, but it brought a stream of blood from the champion's nose. The sight seemed to send the crowd mad. They rose to their feet and howled like a pack of wolves who have scented a quarry.

Even in his distress Phil Carver heard the sound and knew what it portended. Already they were hailing his defeat—those fickle friends who had so often yelped around him in the moment of success. Curse them all! He'd show them. Fierce, cold anger rose in his heart. Collecting all his failing strength and using all his knowledge of ring-craft he made a stupendous effort, drove through the Canadian's guard, and lashed at his face with all the might of his vast body. There were weight and terrific speed behind the blow. It lifted Maclure off his feet and sent him sprawling on his back. The applause was like a sudden crash of thunder above which Carver could hear his wife's shrill cry of joy. Then it died away. The referee was counting: "*One—two*——"

At five Maclure rose to his feet, and before Carver could smash him down again he had stumbled into a clinch. It was at that moment that real despair came over Carver. His bolt was shot. He had done his utmost and failed. With a sudden shock of bewildered surprise he realized that he could not beat this man. It was the bitterest moment of his life.

Back in his corner, Bill Herron, white-faced with anger, bent over him.

"What the devil's the matter with you?



There were weight and terrific speed behind the blow. It lifted Maclure off his feet and sent him sprawling on his back.

Not quitting, are you? Wake up and let's see some fighting."

Phil nodded wearily. "Don't worry—I've got his goat. You wait and see," he lied, for he could not bring himself to own defeat.

The trainer brightened somewhat. "Don't get flurried," he counselled. "There are seven more rounds. Play for points if you can't manage a knock-out."

But in the next round it was palpable even to the most inexperienced spectator that Maclure was scoring heavily. He was too strong for Phil Carver—that was the truth. Carver had the science and was a beautiful, accurate fighting machine, but Maclure was like a great rugged battering-ram that could bear any amount of hammering and yet remain strong enough to inflict punishment.

He was hitting the champion with vicious, deadly punches that left dull flushes upon the white skin. Again and again Carver, now reeling with fatigue, had to save himself by clinching. Twice he was cautioned for holding and the crowd began to cry out that he was yellow. He heard the jeers of his erstwhile friends, but they could no longer sting him to fresh effort. He was past that. He was blind and dizzy; a red mist floated before his eyes; his heart was pounding furiously. Those heavy body blows that he could not stop had taken all the fight and strength from him. He hardly cared whether he won or lost. All he was conscious of was a sort of dull, childish hatred of the cruelty of the mob. His breath came in great sobs; his eyes were dazed and frightened. But no one thought of pity. They hated him because he had lost their money, and they hounded on Maclure with their cries to go in and finish him.

By persistent clinching he saved himself from being knocked out in that round. Back in his corner his seconds worked like demons with towel and sponge, forcing fresh air into his agonized lungs. He was dimly aware that his manager had approached and was whispering cruel, cutting things in his ear.

"You big quitter! Are you frightened of a tough like that? Fight, man, fight. Don't you know we're ruined if you lose?"

"I'm doin' my best," Carver mumbled through his bleeding lips. "He's too strong for me, too strong."

"You're frightened of him," the manager snarled. Then he went back to his chair, chewing an unlighted cigar. He was a fat, podgy man who feared pain as it had been the devil itself.

Before the gong went for the commencement of the next round Phil Carver stole a glance at the faces of the audience that hemmed him in. He could distinctly see the expressions of those who were close to the ringside. They were all the same—contempt and angry surprise. No look of sympathy reached him. He met his wife's eyes. They were hard and avaricious; her long jewelled fingers were playing with the fifty-thousand-pound necklace that had yet to be paid for. He could read her thoughts clearly—she was hoping that she would not have to give it back. That was all she thought of.

A black wave of fury filled Carver's heart. He knew the truth—that these "friends" of his only stood by him when he was successful. If he failed they would drop him even as they had dropped Mike Leonard. Curse them! Tears of anger welled into his eyes.

The gong sounded and he rose mechanically to meet Maclure's rush. The lumberman had cast discretion to the winds and was charging with flailing fists, intent on settling the matter off-hand. Automatically Carver crouched to meet him. Automatically he marked the exposed chin. Automatically he swung with every ounce of his weight and strength. This time there was no mistake. Maclure crashed to the ground and lay motionless.

Pandemonium broke out. The whole of the vast audience was on its feet. Sober citizens danced and raved like madmen. In the street outside the crash of applause was taken up. It seemed to Carver that the entire world was cheering him. The referee finished counting and cried, "Out." He seized Carver's hand and lifted it to signal the winner; there was another roar of almost hysterical cheering; then a wild rush to the ring to seize him and carry him shoulder high. Clara was the first to reach him. She flung her white arms around his neck and kissed him with a fine assumption of passion. She was delighted that he had won, delighted that she need not send back the fifty-thousand-pound necklace.

GEE! It was a fine life, Carver thought to himself. What a lot of friends he had! All falling over each other to shake his hand. He was a whale of a fellow after all! And he was sure that they liked him for his own sake, not just because he'd won. Drop him like a hot potato, indeed! Not they; they were real friends. He knew it.

Babs threw down a packet of notes and some silver.
"Count them," she squealed.

Babs' Bridge Triumph

By

A.E.MANNING FOSTER

BABS burst in on her husband in an ecstasy of excitement.

Harold raised a jaundiced eye full of suspicion. He was, as Babs observed, filling in an idle moment by looking through accounts.

"That's a ghastly habit of yours," she said. "I can't leave you one second without finding you with a face like a Salvation Army preacher poring over bills."

"Well, damn it! I have to pay them."

"Oh, yes! I know, darling, but not now, not immediately to-night. Look at this. See what a hard-working, clever wife has brought her distressed husband, all in one afternoon."

And she threw down a packet of pound notes and some silver.

"Count them," she squealed.

Harold counted: "Twelve pounds seven-

teen shillings and sixpence. My hat, Babs! What does this mean ? "

" Bridge, darling, beautiful Bridge. My Bridge from debt to affluence."

" Silly kid, you can't play Bridge ; at least, not any known kind. What does it all mean ? "

" It means," said Babs serenely, " that Molly has, as you know, started a Bridge Club, and I played there this afternoon for the first time. I simply wiped the floor with all of them. I won every single time. You should have seen their faces. They were furious, even my partners were furious, not a bit grateful. They said : ' You oughtn't to have done this and you ought by rights to have done that.' And all the time if I had played the silly way they considered right, well, it wouldn't have come off.

" First I played at the half-crown table, then I played at the five-shilling table, and I finished up at the ten-shilling table."

" Oh, you did, did you ? " said Harold, grimly. " Molly promised me you should remain at the one-shilling table."

" Now don't try and be a wet blanket, because you know you're really rather pleased. I wouldn't have played at the ten-shilling table, only there was a divine man playing there and he wanted me to cut in. And then we cut together. He was the only really sensible person there. Molly says he's a wonderful player, and he didn't carp and try and pretend all my brilliant coups were just luck. He thought I played jolly well. He said he enjoyed watching my methods, and as he was dummy nearly all the time he had plenty of opportunity.

" He remembered all the cards and put them down on a bit of paper for me to show you. There you are. Look at that."

Harold slowly unfolded the papers in his hand. He was rather a good Bridge player. Problems interested him. He liked studying diagrams and working out the play of A. B., Y. Z.

There were three hands set out, each with lurid headlines such as :—

" MRS. BURDET BRINGS OFF THE GRAND COUP."

" MRS. BURDET'S SPLENDID DOUBLE."

" FEARLESS BIDDING REWARDED BY GRAND SLAM ON A DOUBLED CONTRACT."

This last was the first he studied.

" *Fearless Bidding Rewarded by Grand Slam on a Doubled Contract.*"

Spades—A, 4
Hearts—A, 7, 2
Diamonds—Q, 2
Clubs—A, K, Q, 9, 8, 7

Spades K, Q Hearts—K, Q, J, 10, 9, 3 Diamonds—6, 5, 4, 3 Clubs—2	Y (Dummy) A B Z	Spades—9, 8, 7, 6, 3, 2 Hearts—8, 5, 4 Diamonds—K, 9 Clubs—6, 3

MRS. BURDET.

Spades—J, 10, 5
Hearts—6
Diamonds—A, J, 10, 8, 7
Clubs—J, 10, 5, 4

Score : A B love, Y Z game and twenty-four. Z deals and bids " Two Diamonds " ; A " Two Hearts " ; Y " Two No Trumps " ; B " No bid " ; Z " Three Diamonds " ; A " Three Hearts " ; Y " Four Clubs " ; B " No bid " ; Z " Six Diamonds " ; A " Double." All pass.

BABS leant over his shoulder : " Isn't it lovely ? " she said.

" Can you remember at all how it was done ? " asked Harold.

" Let me see. It looks bewildering done like that, all those nasty little figures like sums. Which is my hand ? "

" You are Z, it says so—Mrs. Burdet."

" Oh, yes, and the Lamb is Y, and that A creature, she was a cat. I said, ' Two Diamonds.' "

" But why ? "

" I had the Ace and lots of Diamonds, why not ? "

" Then you took the Lamb out of his ' No Trump ' call into ' Three Diamonds.' "

" I wanted naturally to play the hand."

" I suppose that was the same reason, after A's ' Three Heart ' bid, which prompted you to call ' Six Diamonds ' over the Lamb's ' Four Clubs ' ? "

" Well, partly, also because I didn't want that devil A to say four or five Hearts. And then the idiot doubled ; that was too delicious of her," said Babs, chuckling. " She hadn't even got the King of Diamonds. She thought she would bluff me into thinking she had, but I didn't fall into that trap."

" Well, tell me exactly how the deed was done."

" A began with the King of Spades. I took with the Lamb's Ace. Then I played the Ace of Hearts and ruffed another Heart just to show her Hearts were dead. Then I played a little Club and took with Dummy's Ace, and I was on the point of ruffing another Heart but I happened to notice a sort of pleased superior look on the faces of A and B while I was fingering the Heart,

and I suddenly realized that we had rather a lot of Clubs between us, so I stopped leading the Heart and began on the trumps. I led Dummy's 2 of Diamonds (How it all comes back to me!), and B didn't put the King on, so I played the Jack and then led out my Ace and caught the King. The Lamb's Queen fell too, but that couldn't be helped."

"I suppose, Babs, you hadn't seen the King in B's hand by any chance, had you?"

"As a matter of fact, I am not sure. People hold their cards so carelessly, but I hadn't really, actually, seen it so as to be dead certain. Anyhow, it was much more convenient to me to suppose he had it.

"When that horrible A remarked that, as she had doubled, I might have given her credit for it, I said it was no use to me to think she had it. I liked to feel it was where I wanted it. And the Lamb said that was the way to play Bridge."

"Oh, I see; well, there may be something in that. Then what happened?"

"After that it was easy. I only had to play my last two Diamonds and start the Clubs, and I threw my Jack and 10 on the King and Queen of Clubs because I was playing so fast I didn't notice; but it didn't matter, they were all the same value, and the Lamb said it was better to do it that way."

"Certainly, as you might have blocked your suit."

"How?"

"Oh, don't bother; all is well that ends well. Then I suppose you threw the Jack and 10 of Spades on the last two Clubs?"

"Of course, and that was Grand Slam doubled, one over trick, contract, rubber, and everything."

"Brilliant!"

Harold looked at the other papers.

"This one here is intriguing. How came you to bring off the Grand Coup?"

"The Lamb called it the 'Grand Coup.' The A woman simply snorted. She really was awful. Of course, I was winning, but she oughtn't to play Bridge if she minds losing to that extent. Every time the Lamb said nice things about my play, she looked as if she were going to burst. You see, he was rather a swell in the Bridge world, and they were all aching to play with him and longing for him to say something nice about their play."

"Well, touching the Grand Coup. How about it?"

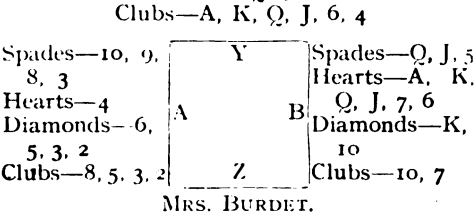
"Oh, the Lamb said it was throwing away a superfluous trump, and that is what I did. I have often done it, but until he told me I never knew how smart it was. In fact, I was surprised myself that he liked it at the time. But he showed how, if I hadn't done it, I should have really lost a trick.

"But that was a game rather far back. I don't think I could possibly tell you how it happened. Anyhow, I am now going to play Bridge at least three times a week and make my fortune."

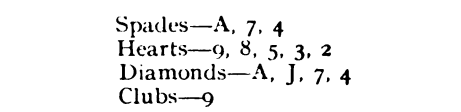
Harold groaned.

IT was later on from Molly that Harold heard the particulars of "Mrs. Burdet's Splendid Double" and the "Grand Coup."

The "Splendid Double" was sound enough. But such was Babs' luck that she could even have "got away with" her amazing "Four Diamond" bid had it been left in. And luck alone gave her the big score she gained.



MRS. BURDET.



Score: Love all. First game of rubber. Y dealt and bid "One Club"; B "Three Hearts"; Z "Four Diamonds"; A and Y "No bid"; B "Four Hearts"; Z "Double." All pass.

Trick one. Z (Babs) led 9 of Clubs. Not because she remembered it was her partner's suit, but because it was a singleton and Babs has a passion for ruffing.

Y won with his Jack of Clubs and continued the suit. At trick 2 Babs discarded the 4 of Spades on the Ace of Clubs led. Trick 3 Y led the King of Clubs, which was trumped by B with the Jack of Hearts, and Babs discarded the 4 of Diamonds and said: "Oh, bother," because she had meant to throw the 7 of Spades.

B now had the lead and led three rounds of Hearts, discarding two small Diamonds from Dummy. At trick 7 B led the Queen of Spades, which Babs promptly took with her Ace and returned the 7 of Spades, for the simple reason that she might ruff later. Y won with his King and played the Queen of Diamonds, B covered, and Babs got the trick with her Ace.

It now dawned on Babs that she had the

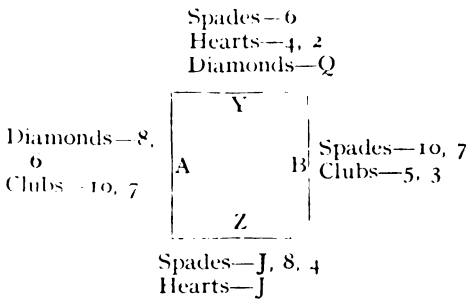
highest Hearts left in and she led them out and made the last two tricks with her Jack and 7 of Diamonds.

The result was a win of 600 points above the line.

The "Grand Coup" happened like this—Molly reading the paper read the heading as "Mrs. Burdet's Grand Coup by Accident."

Score: Game all; Y Z 10 in rubber game.

Spades are trumps and Babs has her contract to make—"Three Spades." She has already made five tricks and requires all the rest for game, rubber, and contract.



It is A's lead, and A leads the 10 of Clubs, Y trumps with the 6 of Spades, B plays the 3 of Clubs, and Z plays the 4 of Spades!

"What have I done?" cried Z (Babs). "Can I have it back?"

"Certainly not," said A.

"All right," sighed Z. "I must make the best of it."

She therefore leads Queen of Diamonds. B, after some hesitation, throws his 5 of Clubs on it and Z throws Jack of Hearts.

Z now leads 4 of Hearts from Y. B plays 7 of Spades and Z the 8 of Spades, she makes her Jack of Spades and all four tricks, game, and rubber.

"Bravo," said Y. "That was splendid. You brought off the Grand Coup."

"What?" asked Babs, bewildered. "I thought I had made a ghastly mistake."

"No; if you had not got rid of that trump you would have been forced to lose a trick."

"How?"

"Why, if you had thrown away your Jack of Hearts. You would have been compelled to trump next time, with the result that you would have had to lead up to B, who must make his 10 of Spades."

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 174.

(The Second of the Series.)

OUR little hero took his seat,
A Christmas pie he had to eat;
With skill he used his little thumb,
And from his pie he pulled a plum,
His name for *number one* will do,
And where he sat is *number two.*

1. Half of a game with stick and ball;
   The key has gone beyond recall.
2. A mighty river, or a State;
   Three cries the sound may indicate.
3. To rise, or educate, may mean;
   The hindmost part is also seen.
4. As any schoolboy knows, abyss,
   Book, Peter, apple—each is this.
5. The ruler of an empire we
   Cut, and the first four letters see;
6. Three letters will supply the rest,
   And all that ruler has been guessed.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 174 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on January 10th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 173.

A FAMOUS English novelist we view,
Who gave us Pickwick, and Micawber too.

1. Winged boy with bow and arrows,
   Lovers he delights and harrows.
2. If Henry were a Frenchman, well, it
   Is not as Henry he would spell it.
3. Sailing to New York? Your notion
   Seems to be to cross this ocean.
4. Bird that caws, the farmer hates him,
   Often checks a king, or mates him.
5. Not in time, but folk as ever
   Better this it is than never.
6. Cricket team I now am sending.
   Number? Odd, with even ending.
7. William Tell was of this nation,
   And this Cottage is a station.

BOODLEBAR.

1. C	u p i	D
2. H	e n r	I
3. A	t l a n t i	C
4. R	o o	K
5. L	a t	E
6. E	l e v e	N
7. S	w i s	S

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

The Peaches

By

A. M. BURRAGE

Illustrated by
E. F. SHERIE

APART from the fact that it was a glorious August morning, the blackbirds in the little walled-in garden, which was devoted to the growth of vegetables and fruit, had every reason to sing. Tanwell's garden had done very well that year, and so, proportionately, had the blackbirds. They perched among the apple trees and fluttered among the beans and gooseberry bushes at one end, while old Dobson, the gardener, worked at the other. Very soon, they knew, old Dobson would go to get his breakfast, and then they could come and get theirs. The plums that year were particularly good. So were the peaches on the south wall, but these were most unsportingly netted in.

The little wooden gate which gave entrance to the walled-in garden was opened by Tanwell himself, and there was instantly a fluttering stampede of black wings. Breakfast in birdland was deferred a little longer, and the principal beneficiaries of Tanwell's garden fled to points of vantage in the surrounding trees.

Tanwell was a painter by profession, and he lived with his two sisters in the little old out-of-the-way country house. He was alone now, for the Misses Tanwell were away on a visit, and he had work to do which prevented him from accompanying them. But he was never really lonely. Nobody needs be lonely nowadays if he has friends in the same county and a five-seater car.

Tanwell was a tall, lean young man, with tired but pleasant manners, and kind brown eyes which always lit up with his slow smile. He had an air of never being in a hurry, and he seldom did hasten over anything. He entered the fruit garden with an air of deliberately giving the birds time to escape.

Old Dobson heard him coming, stood up and touched his hat.

"And how," asked Tanwell, "is Dobson this morning?"

The old gardener grinned and muttered something about the "roomatics."

"The roomatics," said Tanwell, "we take for granted. Like the poor, they are always with us, and the extent of them varies. Apart from the roomatics we are strong, I trust? Good! And how is the Still Life?"

Dobson understood that this was a queer term which his master bestowed on fruit and vegetables.

"Everything comin' along wonderful, sir," he said.

"Good! But I was referring in particular to the peaches. I noticed two yesterday evening which were just about ready, and perhaps I should have been wiser to gather them then, but I prefer them warm from the wall. No more mysterious disappearances, I trust?"

So saying, he walked slowly over to the wall against which the peach trees were nailed, and peered about among the leaves. He turned with a smile of ineffable sadness.

"I put it to you, Dobson, as one man to another, that this is a bit hard. Miss Irene, Miss Dora, and myself are all fond of peaches. Particularly do we like gathering them and eating them in the mornings when the sun has just warmed them. There are, alas, never enough for three. So what do I do? I scheme to get Miss Irene and Miss Dora an invitation to Scotland while the peaches are in season, so that the peaches may give me their undivided attention.

"And what happens, Dobson? Some prowling thief, some fiend-instructed villain, some incarnate pest always gets in first and

half-inches 'em as soon as they're ripe. Once more has history repeated itself. For the umpteenth time, Dobson, what enemy hath done this ? "

" I dunno 'oo it be," growled old Dobson, assuming a frown which he considered proper to the occasion. " Better not let me catch 'im at it, whoever he be."

" Exactly. He seems to have taken particular pains not to let you or anybody else catch him at it. Meanwhile, what is to be done ? The only way to preserve my peaches would seem to be to have a bed made up under the trees. And then I should be able to sympathize properly with your roomatics, Dobson."

" They darned boys——" began the old gardener.

Tanwell held up a hand.

" You are wrong, as usual, my dear Watson. This is no darned boy. How do I know ? You know my methods ; employ them for yourself. Have I been measuring footprints ? Certainly not. It having been so disobliging as to refrain from raining for the past month, there are no footprints to measure. But I know this is a grown man, one who loves peaches even as I love them."

" How do 'ee know that, sir ? " asked old Dobson, interested.

Tanwell smiled the slow and weary smile of all the amateur detectives of fiction when they are about to explain to some blockhead how easy it is.

" Because he takes only the peaches, my dear Watson. What boy who broke into a fruit garden would content himself with a couple of peaches or so at a time ? Would he not also fill his pockets with the Victoria plums, the greengages, and even the early apples and pears ? No, Dobson—Watson, I mean—the thief wears long trousers, horn-rimmed spectacles, a malignant expression, and a gent's rolled gold Albert. It would take me too long to tell you how I have deduced all that. All that I am now concerned with is the means of catching him *in flagrante delicto*. That last phrase, my dear Watson, is Greek for sneaking peaches."

" I could sit up and watch for he," the faithful Dobson suggested.

" A noble offer. But with your age and roomatics I doubt if you'd catch he. Suppose, for instance, he's a good runner ? Besides, waiting up all night among the clouds, dews, and dangers would be simply fatal to your roomatics. No, Dobson, I will lie in ambush. I am determined to have for myself the comparatively few peaches that are left. Shall I take a gun with me, Dobson ? "

Dobson, who was rarely able to follow his master's jokes, only grinned.

As a fact, Tanwell took nothing with him that night except a pocketful of cigarettes. These he doubted if he ought to smoke, lest the odour of tobacco might betray his presence before the thief committed the act of felony. But he was soon tempted beyond his strength.

Three more peaches had ripened, and Tanwell had sworn by all his gods that at least two of them should be on the wall on the following morning, and the third in a place even safer and more possessive.

The raspberries were all done with now, and the canes sprouted richly into leaf. A double row of raspberry canes on the one side, and broad beans on the other, made an excellent hiding-place for anyone who did not mind lying down. At early dusk Tanwell feathered his nest with a ground-sheet and a rug, and as soon as it was quite dark he took up his position.

There were many ways by which a stranger could approach the fruit garden without being seen from the house. There was a paddock behind, with lanes running on two sides of it, and numerous gaps in the hedge. To invade the garden was the simplest thing in the world, but Tanwell grimly decided that to-night at least the invader shoul l encounter difficulties.

The moon was up, a lazy half-asleep Diana in no mood for spear and hound, and the sparse white clouds retreated from her at their own pace. Lying on his back, Tanwell looked up into the interminable void powdered with still white stars, with here and there a planet spinning out its brief period of eternity. This sky and the night sounds and scents of the garden spun a magic which threatened altogether to bewitch him, so that, although he smiled at his own folly, he began to doubt whether he would have the power to be angry with the thief when at last he arrived.

He was kept waiting an hour and a half before he heard soft footfalls on the other side of the low wall which divided the fruit and kitchen gardens from the flower gardens beyond. They came from the direction of the paddock, and Tanwell roused himself a little and smiled softly to himself. They passed along by the wall, and then he heard the click of the little gate at the end.

" Doesn't even bother to shin over the wall," reflected Tanwell. " Takes things easily, does he ? I'll show him ! "

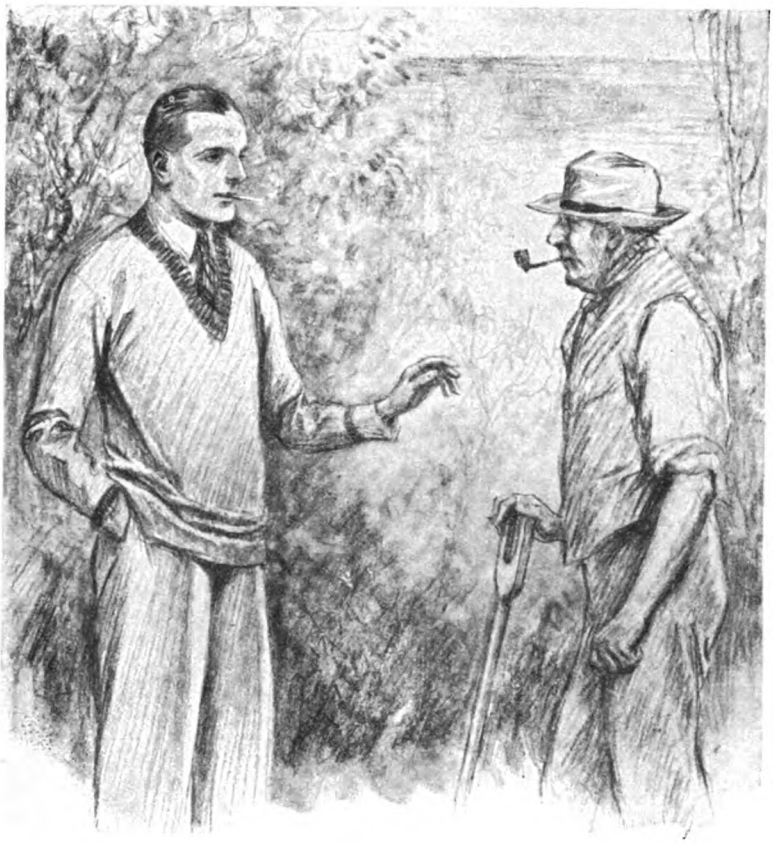
He heard footfalls, such light footfalls, on the path which led directly to the peach trees ; and now he raised himself to a kneeling position, and still higher, inch by inch, because the raspberry canes were between him and the intruder.

For one brief second his head protruded

above the raspberry canes. Then it bobbed down again.

"Well, may I eat frogs!" he whispered to himself. You were wrong that time, Sherlock, my boy. Oh, blazes, what do we do now?"

For the marauder was neither a boy nor a man, but a girl, and a grown girl at that, and a stranger to him. In that brief moment when he peered above the raspberry canes he had beheld a fairy-like creature, white in the moonlight, short-skirted and bare-headed, making straight for the peach trees. He had come prepared to clout a boy's head, or smite a man more heavily, if he proved refractory; but now he felt entirely unequal to the situation.



"This is no darned boy, my dear Watson. What boy who broke into a fruit garden would content himself with a couple of peaches?"

This, he knew, was a kind of cowardice. He told himself that he must do something. That young woman was probably going about demanding sex-equality—when she happened not to be stealing peaches—and if he couldn't clout her head he must at least do something to make her feel uncomfortable.

Up bobbed his head once more, and by this time she was standing by one of the peach trees with her back towards him. Such a fairy-like creature she was that his heart smote him again. Fairy-like, yes, but she was fumbling about among the leaves, evidently feeling for the ripe fruit. The audible snapping of a stem informed him that her search had not been in vain, and spurred him to action. He stood bolt upright and coughed audibly.

The girl jumped as if a bomb had exploded at her feet, uttered a little cry, and turned about. He saw her face clearly in the moonlight for the first time, and even in her surprise and terror it was radiantly pretty. This, thought Tanwell, was hardly fair. But he steeled himself.

His head was already uncovered, so he bowed, smiled his lazy smile, and very equably he said: "Good evening."

She said nothing. She only faced him with staring eyes and parted lips.

"Would you mind waiting a moment?" he asked, politely. "I'm coming round."

What he was to say next he did not know. It was her turn, he reflected, as he made his way round to the path, but women had so little sense of fair play. What on earth could he possibly say?

He was inspired by the time he drew close to her.

"Do you mind showing me what you have in your hand, please?" he asked, very politely. "No, that one, if you don't mind. I wasn't proposing that we should play 'Up, Jenkins.' And please don't look so scared. I——"

"Oh, do you play 'Up, Jenkins'?" she asked, and burst into hysterical laughter.

"It's not an outdoor game," he said, dryly, "and I've never before played it with peaches. Ah, thank you. I'd ear-marked that one for myself to-morrow morning, but you may have it now with my best wishes. We've some very nice plums, too. Come and look at them. You seem not to have noticed the plums."

For answer her hands flew up to cover her eyes; a sob choked her, and he could almost fancy he heard the rush of tears. His face convulsed and he called out to her in horror.

"Here, I say, please! Now don't! Oh, look here, you know, this isn't fair."

"You're being b-b-beastly to me," the girl wailed.

"Beastly? So I am. I'm a cad. Here are you in my garden and I'm making you cry. Why, dash it all, I've got no sense of hospitality. Now will you please dry your eyes, and I'll show you where there are two more ripe peaches."

At that she ceased crying and stared at him half apologetically and half reproachfully.

"Isn't that what they call coals of fire?" she asked.

He sighed heavily.

"It seems I can't do the right thing to-night," he confessed. "But put yourself in my place. I'd been missing peaches, so I laid a trap, hoping to catch a big fat man. But instead, I caught you. Now, what would you do if you were in my place?"

"I suppose I should prosecute myself."

"What, me prosecute myself? I doubt if the law would allow it, and, besides——"

"No, you prosecute me."

He shook his head.

"Somehow," he said, "I can't quite see myself doing that. I don't want to harp on the subject, believe me, but really, you know, you oughtn't to have done it. Bad, you know! Naughty, and all that!"

"I suppose you never robbed an orchard?" she asked, quickly.

"Once, when I was a small boy. But there's a subtle distinction between orchards and gardens. Like shrimps and prawns, you know. And I've lain awake every night since, repenting of it. And then I only did it in fun. Oh, I'm beginning to see! You're only doing this for a lark, are you?"

"No. I'd like to apologize if I can, but I don't know how to begin. And you haven't been beastly to me at all. I just said that. And I really am sorry. Not because you've caught me. I've been sorry all the time I've been doing this."

He looked at her, puzzled.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "the still, small voice! Don't let the peaches worry you. I give them freely. But if you didn't come and take them out of sheer cussedness you've got me baffled. I can't believe that you've been consistently taking all these risks for about a shilling's worth of fruit per visit. You might have encountered somebody a great deal more disagreeable than even I."

SHE looked on the ground before her and waited a moment or two before speaking.

"I'd rather not tell you why I did it," she said, slowly.

"Why?"

"Oh, even if you believed me, I should hate telling you. I hate listening to sob-stuff stories myself."

He inclined his head.

"Ah!" he suggested. "Invalid mother?"

"No, brother," she corrected, and then bit her lip.

"Good shot, though, wasn't it?" he said. "Good old Sherlock! And now——"

"I may as well tell you, then," she said, in a subdued murmur. "After all, you may not think so badly of me. My people are on their way home from India. When my small brother left school for his summer holidays I had a letter asking me to take rooms down here and look after him until they arrived. They'll be home in three weeks now.

"We'd only been here two days when Philip, my brother, fell ill of some rare and virulent form of influenza. Dr. German pulled him through, and I nursed him, but it was touch and go. He never really rallied, though, and he's not quite out of danger yet; he's been left so weak. I've been told to humour him in every way.

"Well, about ten days ago some friends of ours in London sent him down a box of peaches, and he'd no sooner tasted them than—— You know what a lot little boys think of their——"

She paused suddenly and laughed.

"Internal economies?" suggested Tanwell, helping her over her own stile.

"Yes. Well, it was peaches, peaches all day long with him. And you can't buy peaches at the village shop. I couldn't leave him to go into the town and get some, and there was nobody I could send. I wrote to the people who sent the first lot, but they've since gone abroad. And all the while he was pining away for peaches and going back instead of going forward. And then I heard casually that you'd got some, so——"

"But, my dear child," he cried, explosively, "why didn't you come and ask me?"

"How could I?" she retorted. "How

" I'd been missing peaches, so I laid a trap to catch a big, fat man. But, instead, I caught you! Now, what would you do in my place?" he asked.

could I call on a strange man and beg for peaches? No, hateful as it was, it seemed easier to come and take them. And I made it up—I mean, I meant to make it up with you in some way."

He considered, and then regarded her for a moment out of his kind and lazy eyes.

"I'm sorry about your brother," he said, "but I must ask for your name and address. I'm going to prosecute after all."

She knew better, and smiled confidently at him.

"I know you're not," she said.

"Well, name and address all the same, please."

"Why?"

"Well, if you must know, I'm going to send the peaches down to your brother as they ripen. And as there aren't many I shall take care that he gets further supplies from Brimington——"

She interrupted with a little cry of protest.

"Oh, but I can't rob you——"

"Can't you!" he exclaimed. "Why, you could give lessons at it!" And he roared with laughter.

She joined in. The situation was so ludicrous, and she felt now so safe, so glad that it had all happened. Whoever he might be, he was a dear, she told herself. And Tanwell, between gulps of laughter, was wishing that he had a whole forest of laden peach trees to offer her.

So she told him that her name was Joyce Manton and that she was lodging in the village half a mile away with a certain Mrs. Hunt. Tanwell took a mental note of the names and saw her to the gate. Her gratitude and her attempts to apologize strangely wounded him, and when she left him he was half dazed and bewildered, with a heart which sang for joy at its own new and subtle and indescribable pain.

Tanwell did not go to bed for many hours that night. He walked his garden under the stars, conjuring up visions of the girl he had caught stealing his peaches. He knew already what that sweet thief had done to him.

THE day following was a restless one for Tanwell. He called with peaches at the cottage where the brother and sister were lodging, and made inquiries after the boy, but he did not ask to see Joyce. He felt a certain delicacy about taking her away from her brother, if only for a minute or two; and had he asked for an interview it might have seemed that he had come to ask for her thanks.

"She will be here for three more weeks," he told himself. "I shall see her often as soon as the boy is better."

Men when they first take a strong interest in a girl are never free of worries. He began to wish now that he had met her in some other way. After all, she had stolen. Twist it how he would, consider all the extenuating circumstances, but the theft remained. He wished from his heart that she had not done this thing, because he wanted her perfect, and she had robbed herself of perfection. He wished she had written to him, come and begged of him, done anything but steal. It made no difference to his regard for her—was it love already?—but the memory of it left a cloud, a sort of stain. Men are sometimes able to love where they do not respect, but Tanwell was very much an idealist.

So that night, still troubled by many busy and conflicting thoughts, he wandered into the garden after dusk, and turned automatically towards the little walled-in enclosure in which he had found her the night before.

At the gate he halted suddenly, like a man who finds himself unexpectedly on the brink of a cliff. Standing over yonder by one of the peach trees was a familiar figure in white. He saw one of the girl's hands lose itself among the leaves.

If ever man was hurt and startled, that man was Tanwell. So she couldn't accept his peaches as a gift: it was better fun to indulge a predatory instinct by coming and taking them! His first thought was to slip away and pretend he had not seen her. And then he asked himself why he should show her mercy. If he must tear something out of his heart it was best done there and then.

He opened the gate, and at the sound she turned with a start.

"Good evening, Miss Manton," he said, in a quiet, colourless voice. "This is an unexpected pleasure. By the way, it's no use feeling in that tree. They're all gone. But a little farther along——"

She answered him with a little cry which the walls of the garden caught and tossed back to him.

"Hullo! Oh! Oh, Mr. Tanwell!" She stopped and made a little gesture of the hands symbolical of utter confusion. "I didn't expect to see you."

"No?" he said, lamely. He tried to keep irony from his tone, but, if he succeeded, her sensitive ear robbed him of his success.

"Oh, you don't think—after your kindness—after giving me and promising me your peaches—you didn't think—you didn't think——"

He had been walking towards her and now was almost close against her.

"I don't think anything," he said, more politely than sincerely. "I am very glad to see you. I don't ask for explanations. Only, of course, I don't understand."

She stood looking at him and was biting her lip.

"This is rather hard on me," she said, "if you only knew. I believe you really do think—— But why should I rob you of what you have already promised?"

"I haven't asked for explanations," he reminded her. "I've already said that I'm glad to see you. Let's see if we can find something for your brother to-morrow."

He thrust his hand through the leaves, and his fingers scraped the wall.

"There aren't any peaches there," she said quickly.

"Yes, I told you that. But you didn't know. And I'm not perfectly sure——"

"Oh, please come away," she cried, stamping her foot.

BEYOND the leaves his fingers encountered a hole in the wall where a brick had fallen out. And in the niche his fingers encountered a number of discs with milled edges, which felt like, and actually were, half-crowns. He pulled out half a handful and examined them, and felt his heart shake off its burden as a dog shakes water from its coat.

"You've come to put these here!" he burst out. "You've tried to pay me! Oh, you absurd and delightful child! After I'd promised——"

"I didn't!" she cried out.

He eyed her humorously but half sternly.

"Do you know where small girls go after they've told bangers? You put that money there. At least fifteen bob, as I'm a living man."

"I came to rob you to-night," she protested, and shrank away from him.

"Yes? You knew that somebody had been putting money in a hole in the wall behind the peach leaves? And you came to take it away? But how clever of you to know it was there! I didn't!"

"Oh, you're horrible!" she cried, feelingly.

"Wouldn't it be as well to tell me the exact truth, and then find out how horrible I am?"

She hesitated, half laughing, half abashed.

"If I really tell you the truth, will you promise not to be angry with me?"

"No. I'm almost certain to be angry. You've tried to pay me for those peaches. And I'm not a market-gardener, you know. And considering I gave them——"

"You don't understand yet," she interrupted. "I told you I came to rob you; so I did. I came to take the money away to-night. After you'd been so—so nice to me I couldn't insult you by letting you find it there. It would have hurt you, and I couldn't do that. But until I met you I never meant to rob you. Until last night I put money for every peach I took into that hole in the wall, knowing that it would be found when the leaves fell. But after I met you I knew you'd be hurt and angry, so I came to-night to take it away. I never wanted to steal. I wanted to pay you—in some way."

He looked at her without a feather's weight of care on his heart and uttered a great laugh.

"You ridiculous child! You've made me happier than you know. So you wanted to pay me, did you? Do you still want to pay me?"

"Y-yes."

"How?"

"I don't know how. You've been so nice to me——"

"Yes, you do know how," he said quickly, while his heart beat hard.

She hesitated for a long moment.

"You'll promise not to move until I call Coo-ee'?"

"Yes."

"Promise?"

"Yes."

She took another second to make up her mind. Then she stood on tiptoe, jerked up her head and kissed him, and flitted down the garden like a little white ghost.

Tanwell called to her, but he kept his word and stayed, and she did not stop. His heart was singing now, and "She will be here for three more weeks" was the burden of its song.

The gate clicked, there was a scampering of little feet, and a voice called: "Coo-ee!"

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

CASES FROM MY CRIME-BOOK

THE "EYE OF THE POLICE."
Badge of Parisian Detectives.

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. X. THE DOUBLE LIFE OF DR. BOUGRAT.

Physician and *Apache.*

TRULY there is a squat, evil, leering Hyde lurking in the slime and murk of man's primeval memory; a twin self, which every one of us drags along from youth to old age, as a convict on the Devil's Isle drags his chain and ball. He is shut away in the subconscious mind, and on the door are graven "*Christianity*" and "*Civilization.*" Yet he is alert and ready to leap forth at any moment. Some are fortunate—the door is locked and bolted, and the primitive evil hammers in vain on the barrier, transmitting only the vibrations of his bestial rage. With others the barrier is frail—let them but once slip back the bolt and with a rush and a roar of glee Hyde takes possession. Every sensuous thought weakens the power to resist the creature's promptings.

Only thus can one explain the sudden crash, the abrupt fall of that Jekyll in real life—Dr. Pierre Bougrat, of Marseilles, physician of note, young, happy, with a good practice and an excellent reputation. His professional career and home life should have placed him far above temptation.

Esteemed by all, Dr. Bougrat, who was born in Annecy in 1890, had been given the Legion of Honour—that highest award of the French soldier—for his gallant conduct during the war. In 1920 Dr. Bougrat settled down in a spacious apartment, 37, rue Senac, in Marseilles, and married the daughter of a well-known medical man, Dr. Avierinos, who, as a wedding gift, presented the son-in-law with the greater part of his lucrative practice. A year later a baby girl came to gladden the life of the young couple. It is inconceivable that a man so high in the good graces of

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Destiny should in the short space of two years have become a criminal—a vile slinking *apache*, frequenting the dregs of the underworld, speaking their snarling argot; a gentleman by day, a ruffian by night; until a foul and cowardly murder finally sent him crushed and shattered to await his fate in the condemned cell. Those who believe in demoniac possession could not find a more astounding subject for investigation than this perplexing case. Nor is it a story of the past—for Dr. Pierre Bougrat was sentenced to be guillotined by the Court of Aix-en-Provence in May, 1927.

I chanced to be in Marseilles, busy on another case, when the man was first arrested for passing worthless cheques. I can thus relate the facts from my own work during the investigation, and from the records in the archives of the Police.

THE WEDDING OF DR. BOUGRAT.

THE air was fragrant with the queer scent of southern seaports. Dazzling sunshine and a deep blue sky added their harmony of light to the brilliant colours of the curious throng which had gathered around the ancient bronze doors of Notre Dame des Douleurs. A wedding, almost a society wedding, had caused the idlers to collect. Young girls carrying baskets of golden oranges, which glowed as though of burnished metal, completed a picture of crude contrasts such as one only sees in the land of the olive and the cedar. The ceremony was over, the bells pealed loudly, and the drone of the organ suddenly swept in a burst of stately music from the opening doors. For a moment the newly-joined couple halted in the shadow, dazzled by the vivid glare, whilst a babble of Latin voices discussed their appearance with laughing freedom.

Dr. Pierre Bougrat.

The man was Dr. Pierre Bougrat, young and handsome and faultlessly dressed. On his arm was the bride, in shimmering white, a huge veil draping her face and form. Confused at the critical remarks of the crowd, she gathered her train with a graceful gesture and prepared to run the gauntlet of confetti and shouts of good will. She was happy, radiantly happy, and she looked at her husband with adoration shining in her eyes. He too was proud of his beautiful wife, and seemed unwilling to curtail this moment of triumph.

At last the pair moved slowly forward, casting smiles right and left. A young girl with flashing black eyes and brown curly hair, who had pushed her way to the front of the crowd, was standing with parted lips, looking at the advancing couple. Her eyes were fastened on the man, and as he encountered her gaze he started violently and the colour receded from his face. For a moment these two remained, staring hypnotically; then almost with an audible snap the circuit of riotous thoughts was broken, the bride and bridegroom crossed the stretch of carpeted street and entered their waiting car, whilst Andrea Audibert, the girl, withdrew with a laugh and disappeared in the crowd.

That moment was the turning point in the life of Dr. Bougrat. A tide of wild fantastic shapes was seething in his brain as the car drove off, although outwardly he appeared calm. But the eyes—those cruel brilliant eyes of Andrea—were graven on his memory. His wife's voice roused him from a reverie.

"Who was that girl, Pierre? How she stared at you! Do you know her?"

"No, sweetheart. I never saw her before, but you know what these common people are. They love to act and posture to make their friends believe all kinds of things. I thought she was looking at you," he lied, as an afterthought.

So for the time the matter dropped, but somehow the incident cast a gloom over the day, and it was with a sigh of relief that the young wife snuggled down in the train which was carrying them to the Italian lakes, where they were to spend their honeymoon. Yet it was true; her husband had never seen the girl before. But from that predestined moment she haunted his thoughts. By day he had only to close his eyes to see again the red smiling lips, the brilliant eyes, and the curly hair. At night he dreamed of them.

"She has bewitched me, confound her," he muttered to himself more than once, and he startled his wife one morning by

asking her suddenly, "Do you believe in the evil eye—the 'Jettatura' of the Italians?"

"Why, darling?" she inquired anxiously; "what a queer question!"

"Well, I ask because I still seem to see that creature staring at me, whom we met on our wedding day."

His wife shuddered and crossed herself in haste, and later he found her in tears. It was his last attempt at frankness, for from day to day the obsession grew and he realized that it was not repulsion but desire; a mad violent passion which had taken possession of his soul. However wrong it was, he must find the girl again.

BOUGRAT CANNOT FORGET.

A LETTER from an agent, stating that a suitable apartment with a surgery had become vacant in the rue Senac, came as a welcome excuse. The honeymoon was curtailed, and Dr. Bougrat and his wife returned to Marseilles and settled down in their new home. For a time both were busy, he with the installation of his surgery and laboratory, she with the thousand schemes for beautifying their apartment which a loving wife will always weave. Everyone and everything conspired to make them happy. Friends flocked to welcome them, invitations to dances and dinners came daily, and the practice which Dr. Avierinos was deflecting to his son-in-law was already shaping for certain success. But Dr. Bougrat was dissatisfied. He knew—he felt—that there was no peace, no rest for him, until he discovered the girl who had so impressed him. At all costs he must meet her and speak to her. He hoped thus to know once and for all whether he could tear her image from his heart, or was destined to surrender helplessly to her charms.

His moods, fantastic and uncertain at best of times, became irritable and gloomy. When his wife inquired tenderly if anything was on his mind, he replied that his nerves were still at times upset by the sufferings endured in the war, and for a space this reply deceived everyone.

As his increasing practice demanded much of his time he began to specialize in gynæcology, hoping that perhaps among his feminine patients the unknown might appear. Then, in the evening, he would leave his flat by the laboratory door, slinking out in secret, to wander aimlessly from street to street and from tavern to tavern. To see her once more, to encounter again the gaze of those magnetic eyes, was the maddening thought which swirled round in his brain; whilst the vision seen on his wedding day danced ever like a will-o'-the-wisp before him. At times he fought frenziedly against the obsession, for as a doctor he realized that he was on the brink of monomania. But, although he smiled grimly at the self-deception, he reasoned weakly and falsely that the only cure was to destroy the grotesque impression by making the girl's acquaintance, when his mental image of her would probably dwindle to its proper proportions—that of an ignorant peasant. For, despite her beauty, he knew that she was not of his own kind.

For many months his search was unavailing, and he began to fear that she had left the town. Quarrels provoked by his selfish neglect of his wife became more and more frequent, and the future of the young couple was already seriously endangered when a baby girl was born. The little creature should have become a link between husband and wife, but it was only for a moment that the tide of his thoughts was stemmed. The mother now transferred her love to the child and gave Dr. Bougrat that freedom which he craved in secret.

HE SEES ANDREA AGAIN.

IT was at the races, quite unexpectedly, that he saw Andrea again. At the conclusion of the main event a boisterous crowd was escorting horse and jockey to the stables, and for a second a glimpse of flashing eyes and red voluptuous lips thrilled him like an electric shock. The jostling, excited crowd prevented the doctor from approaching, but with clenched teeth, indifferent to insults and angry protests, he elbowed his way forward until he could watch the girl's movements. Unfortunately she was not alone. Several men of the type the South calls "Nervi," who correspond to the *apaches* of Paris, were with her, and made an effective barrier. Dr. Bougrat could do nothing but watch, yet he resolved to wait and follow, until at least he discovered where she lived. He realized now that she was of the dregs—common, vulgar, probably of doubtful virtue. Yet, strange to say, the thought gave him no pain—rather did he welcome the knowledge that thus she would be his more easily.

Night had come before the girl and her friends made any move to return to town, and several further hours were spent drifting from tavern to tavern. At last, after many noisy leave-takings, he saw that she was about to go home. One of the men, a squat, broad-shouldered fellow, young and handsome in a coarse fashion, accompanied her to a squalid dwelling near the harbour: a den of thieves and worse. Undaunted, not even feeling the pangs of hunger, Dr. Bougrat—the man of fashion—settled down in a Chinese tea-house opposite, determined to wait, certain that his patience would be

rewarded. His abnormal condition made him indifferent to the curious looks and snarling comments of the men and women lounging at the tables. He had commenced his third cup of opium tea, when he noticed that two girls were whispering and pointing in his direction. When they perceived that he was aware of their scrutiny, one of them came to his table, and bending down asked :—

" What are you—police ? " Bougrat shook his head.

" No—I am waiting for the girl with the black eyes who lives over there," and he jerked his head towards the dirty house.

" Oh, you mean Andrea *la guapa ;* but she is the sweetheart of ' the Panther '—Marius — one of the most deadly Nervi in Marseilles. You'll get a knife in your ribs if you meddle with his girl."

" Andrea, you say ? What else ? "

" Andrea Audibert ; she is from Arles. We call her ' la guapa ' because she looks Spanish. She has run away from home because of Marius. If you like, I'll go and tell her that you wish to make her acquaintance. That is, if you make it worth my while, for Marius would kill me if he knew."

Andrea " La Guapa."

Dr. Bougrat pulled a bank-note from his pocket, foolishly displaying a bulging wallet, and handed it to the girl, who with a grin slipped the money into her stocking and disappeared. The doctor strolled to the door, his heart beating wildly. At last the long-deferred moment had arrived. Suddenly he saw two slim feminine shapes in the dark frame of the open door, and at the same moment a hand beckoned. Without hesitation he walked across the narrow street and entered. Before him, almost touching him, was the vision of his dreams, and a wave of fragrant perfume added to the intoxication of his senses. But he felt embarrassed and tongue-tied, and was unable to say more than " Mademoiselle—I—I have loved you since the day I was married."

A burst of shrill laughter made him realize the utter absurdity of such a speech. Seeing his difficulty, the girl who had been his messenger flitted from the doorway and left them alone. Now speech came in a torrent , with burning words he described how she had haunted him, how he had searched high and low, until at last that day he had found her.

" And you are rich ? " came in an eager whisper from her, the first words she had spoken. They chilled his ardour somewhat, but with a shrug of the shoulders he answered :—

" Yes, I am rich, and can give you many presents—jewels, furs, fine dresses——"

" Good ! But what about Marius ? " a hoarse voice growled from the gloom. A rough hand pushed the girl aside, and the sneering face of " the Panther " was thrust within an inch of the doctor's. Before he could reply, the head was lowered and struck him like a battering-ram in the stomach.

THE FATAL SCRAP OF PAPER.

WHEN the doctor regained his senses he was lying in the gutter —bruised, bleeding, with torn clothes. His jacket and pocket-book, watch and rings —all had been taken. The foul alley was dark and deserted, and the feel of dawn was in the air. Painfully he dragged himself along the cobbles until at last twinkling lights warned him that the Cannebière, the Boulevard of Marseilles, was before him.

To his wife, who was mad with anxiety at his prolonged absence, he explained that he had been attacked and robbed. His appearance confirmed this story, but unfortunately his wife found a scrap of paper in the pocket of his waistcoat on which had been scrawled :—

" Imbecile ! Next time you'll not try to steal another man's girl."

Worst of all, it was his wife's birthday, a fact which he had quite forgotten when he left the house early the previous day. His wife packed her trunks, returned with her baby to her father, and commenced divorce proceedings.

Events now crowded on the unfortunate man with a rush. At first utter anguish held him in its grip, but like an evil whisper, permeating his despair came the thought—crushed, stifled, but still there—" You are free now, free to woo Andrea ! "

For several days Dr. Bougrat sought the treacherous solace of morphine. Not to think—that was his desire—but thought would not be banished, and although stupefied with drugs his dreams gravitated around the one centre—Andrea ! At last he roused himself from his lethargy. A locum tenens he had called could look after his patients for the time, whilst he gave himself up to a frantic search. His first care was to dress as a ruffian, then with a loaded revolver in

his pocket he slipped out by the back door and gained the harbour. He had determined to shoot the Nervi on the slightest provocation. Already murder seemed nothing if by killing the man he could gain his heart's desire. But the house was empty. Aware of his identity—for his pocket-book had contained several letters—the sweet couple had fled in fear of the police. Bougrat laughed bitterly when the same girl he had sent to call Andrea related their hurried flight.

"As if the devil would let her out of my life," he said. "We are bound by chains forged in hell. I will find her and she shall be mine." Released from all restraint, he spent his nights roaming through the worst haunts. Of set purpose, knowing full well that the girl would never ascend to his level, he deliberately debased himself and descended to hers. He sought the companionship of all the scum of the Mediterranean seaport. Negroes, Lascars, Chinese coolies, and the women of this world of vice and crime taught him their tricks, their manners, and their slang. In a short time he became one of them. His appearance no longer excited comment, for his dress and talk differed in nothing from their own. Fights with deadly weapons, bludgeons, knives, and pistols, became a nightly diversion, and many times he crawled home at dawn, wounded, sore, and ragged. With his fall he had grown cunning, and no one suspected that the handsome smiling doctor, faultlessly groomed, who by day tended his patients with care, became at night a creature of loathsome habits, possessing every vice.

THE FIGHT FOR ANDREA.

AND then he saw Andrea again, accompanied by her lover. This time Bougrat was not afraid. Assuming a truculent air, he slouched up to the couple and with a blow knocked the fellow down. At once all was confusion. Tables were hurled aside, chairs were seized by the legs, bottles and glasses flew through the air. Bougrat had now many friends, so had "the Panther," and these at once split into clans and crowded round their leaders. A battle was imminent, when Andrea sprang on a table and, throwing her arms wide, yelled :—

"Stop! Stop! My lover, Marius, shall fight with his rival. A fair fight, and I'll belong to the winner."

A roar of approval greeted the words, and a lonely spot near the coast was at once chosen. Bougrat relinquished his pistol and was handed a long knife, whilst a similar weapon was given to the *apache*. The girl was to watch the fight whilst the others barred the road at each end.

Like wild beasts the two men faced each other—their jackets wrapped round their left arms as shields. But Bougrat was no match for Marius, who since his childhood had learned to fight for his life. An upward stab, that was like the flicker of a snake's tongue, caught the doctor in the shoulder. His knees sagged, the knife dropped from his hand, already the *apache*—a cruel glint in his tiny eyes—was preparing to drive the blade to the heart, when Bougrat yelled :—

"Stop! Enough! Don't kill me! I'll buy Andrea from you."

At the words, Marius straightened up. Money! That was better than murder, and what was a girl after all?

"All right! How much will you pay?"

"Two thousand francs."

A shrill cry came from Andrea :—

"You miser! Is that all I'm worth? Kill him, Marius!"

But the others had now closed round the group; some of the money would be spent on liquor, and they decided to put the matter to the vote.

THE BARGAIN.

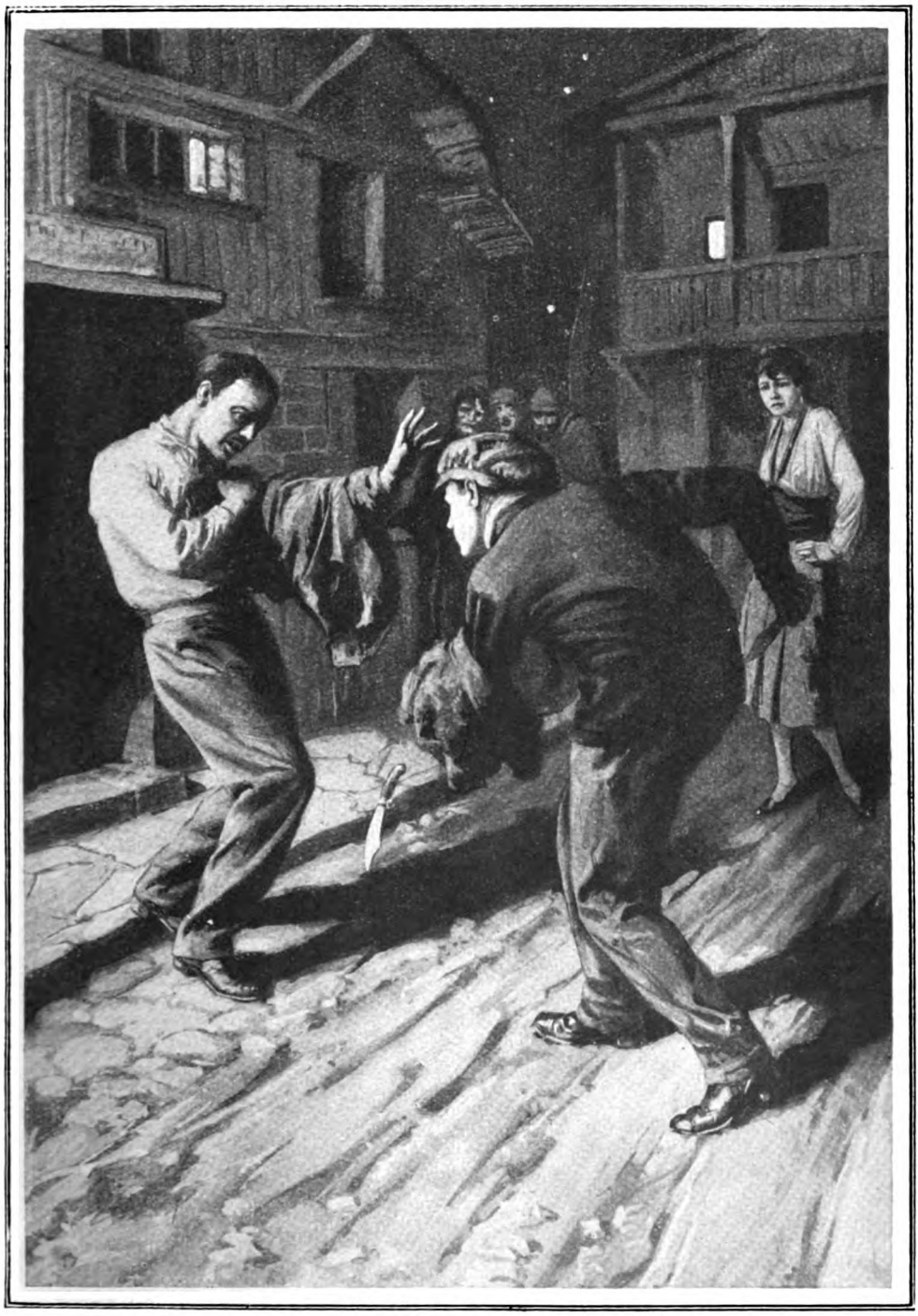
THE outcome of this strange bargain was that Dr. Bougrat was to pay four thousand francs to Marius, who agreed to relinquish all right to the favours of Andrea. Furthermore, Marius was to receive three hundred francs a month. Whilst this was paid regularly he would keep out of the way, but his right to the girl would revert to him if Dr. Bougrat failed to pay this income. A letter, which was later found in the doctor's house, was written and signed to that effect. This letter is reproduced in facsimile on page 50. A translation of it is as follows :—

"If I receive four thousand francs and coffee with rum is given to all the pals, Andrea la Guapa shall belong to the doctor—who is to hand me three hundred francs every month on the 30th. Otherwise the wench comes back to me.

"Marius,
"Called the Panther."

Andrea and the *apache* accompanied the doctor to the rue Senac, where, after applying a bandage to his wound, weak and pale, but with a surge of savage joy at the sight of the girl so soon to reign in his home, as she had long reigned in his heart, the poor deluded fool paid the four thousand francs. "The Panther" withdrew. Andrea remained!

One can imagine that the life which Dr. Bougrat now led has a parallel only in the history of the Revolution, when lords and



The *apache* was preparing to drive the blade to the heart, when Bougrat yelled:—
"Stop! Enough! Don't kill me! I'll buy Andrea from you."

ladies, herded in foul cells with the mob, danced and made love to each other, whilst as a grim apotheosis the guillotine waited at the end of a cobbled street, over which the tumbrils rumbled daily, carrying their load of resignation and vainglorious defiance. Dr. Bougrat, too, laughed and defied Destiny, for he had gained his heart's desire, and the guillotine—but a shadow as yet—also waited without.

Marius,
called "The Panther."

The glamour of passion was soon rent to shreds. Andrea had only one thought: money, money, and yet more money. And this stream of money was spent foolishly in carousing with her former friends, on gaudy jewels and mad caprices. Unlike most of her type, she had no ambition to become a lady. Of the dregs she was, and of the dregs she remained, and down, down in a whirling rush she dragged the man, weak and unresisting. It appears that at this period he again called drugs to his aid. Naturally enough, poverty soon grimaced at his elbow; his patients began to shun his surgery, and his friends shook their heads and sighed. By day he still parodied the elegant, carefree doctor, but he found it increasingly difficult to hide the growing coarseness of his ways.

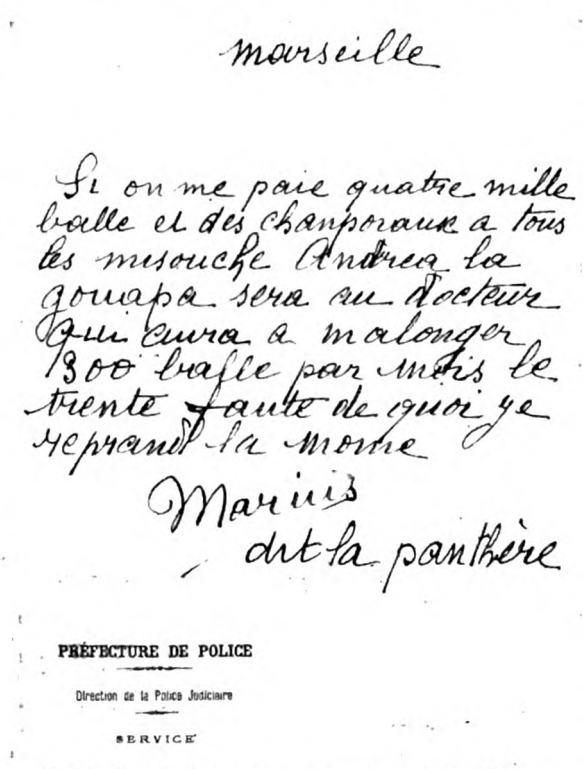
Imperceptibly at first, but ever gaining ground, the primitive beast claimed his soul. Mr. Hyde was triumphing over Dr. Jekyll. Bougrat struggled vainly in the net, and for a time refused to commit a crime. Then it was that Andrea, sure of her power, played her trump card and disappeared from the rue Senac. That was the end of his resistance. Money would bring her back, so money he would obtain.

THE FIRST CRIME.

AMONG the doctor's patients was a beautiful Greek girl named Odette Lepocal, who occupied a lonely villa at La Ciotat, a tiny locality not far from Marseilles. She was in the habit of coming once a week for treatment, which consisted of the injection of a certain serum. Her story is that on the day she usually paid her visit to the doctor he himself came to her villa, saying with an amiable smile :—

"I happened to be at La Ciotat for another patient, madam, so I thought I would spare you the journey, the more so since you should always rest and sleep after the injection. If you will lie down on your couch, I will tend you here."

Quite unsuspicious, Mlle. Odette did as he suggested. At the prick of the needle a fierce pain caused her to cry out wildly, and she lost consciousness almost at once. When she came to her senses, she was firmly tied to a truckle bed in an unfamiliar room. A masked man was holding a bottle of salts under her nose, whilst seated at a table were several sinister ruffians. She attempted to call for help,



marseille

Si on me paie quatre mille balle et des chanporaux a tous les misouche Andrea la gouapa sera au docteur qui aura a malonger 300 balle par mois le trente faute de quoi ye reprand la mome

Marius
dit la panthère

PRÉFECTURE DE POLICE

Direction de la Police Judiciaire

SERVICE

Facsimile of the agreement under which Marius gave up Andrea to Dr. Bougrat.

A translation is on page 48.

but the poison in her blood had robbed her of the power to move or speak. Seeing her eyes open, the masked man, who, she feels sure, was Dr. Bougrat, grasped her hand and felt her pulse, unconsciously drawing a gold watch from his pocket. Then, in a husky assumed voice, and with coarse words, he informed her that she was a prisoner and would remain there until she revealed where her money was hidden. She shook her head in sign of refusal, but the effort caused her to lapse once more into unconsciousness.

Odette Lepocal.

That same night a car coming along the high road from Toulon to Marseilles was attacked by masked bandits, who had hidden in a tiny stone hut used by the road-menders to keep their tools. By a miracle the shots fired at the chauffeur missed him, although they smashed the wind screen. Thanks to his powerful engine the man escaped unhurt.

Two patients—both women, who at the time were loath to inform the police—came forward later and stated that after the usual injection, which, strange to say, Dr. Bougrat insisted on giving at their homes, they had both lost consciousness. When they recovered they found the doctor at their bedside. After giving them stimulants he informed them that their condition was not serious, and in fact one of the patients soon recovered, but the other, Mme. Lepic, was seriously ill for a long time. Later, when the doctor had gone, both women discovered that their jewellery and money were missing.

DESPERATE MEASURES.

NATURALLY, Dr. Bougrat realized that such tricks would quickly bring about his arrest, and he sought a victim who could give him the means of regaining the truant Andrea. Soulless and utterly bereft of pity, he chose his former comrade in arms, Jacques Rumèbe, for Rumèbe was paymaster of a large factory, and every Saturday carried twenty thousand francs from the bank to the works. It was a simple matter to prepare the trap. Rumèbe was a patient, and came regularly for treatment on Saturday mornings. On March 13th he called as usual. The doctor, after a rapid examination, informed his friend that a second injection of serum would be necessary, and told him to call at two o'clock on his way from the bank.

"You can enter by the laboratory door, old friend," he said, slapping Rumèbe on the back. "Come straight up, so that you need not wait your turn."

Unsuspicious of his impending fate, Rumèbe called with his bag, in which by a strange chance there were only nine thousand francs this time. He entered and was never seen alive again!

That same evening it was noticed that Bougrat was spending money freely. Late at night he discovered Andrea and lured her back with the sight of a bundle of bank-notes and the promise of more to come.

Meanwhile poor Mlle. Odette was still a prisoner watched by the *apache* Marius,

One of the lairs of the *apache* Bougrat.

Mme. Lepic.

who had now become the doctor's ally. Stubborn and angry, Mlle. Odette had refused to give way, but her strength was ebbing fast. The disappearance of the girl and the paymaster caused a tremendous stir in Marseilles. Mlle. Odette had lived quite alone, but Rumèbe was married and father of two girls. No one as yet suspected Dr. Bougrat, and it was rumoured that Rumèbe had betrayed his trust. The wife in her despair went to his friend and comrade, the doctor, who cynically offered to help in the search, adding :—

"If he has been killed, madam, you may come to me for a post-mortem. I shall not charge anything."

The horror of this remark was overwhelming, when it was proven in court that at the time it was uttered the body of the man was hidden in the room where the distracted wife was sitting.

The downward rush of the doctor was now gathering momentum. The nine thousand francs were but a drop in the ocean. There is no doubt that Andrea, and Marius, too, guessed at, if they did not actually take part in, the crime. Money was urgently needed. Bougrat knew that sooner or later

Jacques Rumèbe.

the odour of decay would betray him. Flight, instant flight, and if possible the removal of the body, had become imperative.

Dr. Bougrat (centre, handcuffed) tries to appear unconcerned after the discovery of the body.

The man with a walking-stick is Chief-Inspector Robert.

HE SEEKS ANOTHER VICTIM.

TWO days after murdering his friend, he called on a jeweller named M. Arietti and stated that he desired to buy a diamond ring as a present for his *fiancée*. Not having anything valuable enough in his shop, the jeweller asked the doctor to call later. At the second visit Bougrat chose a handsome solitaire priced at thirty-nine thousand francs. This he carried away on approval, paying with a cheque, but insisting that it

was not to be cashed until he returned to say if his *fiancée* liked the ring. The name on the cheque was sufficient for the unsuspicious jeweller, who parted with the ring. The next morning Dr. Bougrat called again and returned the trinket with the remark that it had failed to please. He chose instead another for forty-nine thousand francs, leaving the same worthless cheque as deposit. As an afterthought he said :—

" By the way, I am the doctor of the Russian Colony. An old lady, a countess, wishes to sell her jewellery. It is a fine collection, worth at least two hundred thousand francs, but I know that she would take fifty thousand. If you like you can come to my house this evening ; the countess will be there, and if you bring the money you can conclude the deal right away."

The jeweller replied that he had only thirty thousand francs in his safe.

" Never mind," said the doctor, " I'll advance the difference. Better still—I'll tell you what—bring some pearl necklaces for my *fiancée* to choose from, and what I pay you will make up the sum you need."

Naturally enough the jeweller was overjoyed, but his wife, who had not fallen under the charm of the doctor's personality, insisted that Arietti should take his assistant with him.

As soon as the jeweller was in the surgery Dr. Bougrat asked him to be seated whilst he went to fetch the countess. In reality the doctor crept to the front door and carefully examined the street. He at once espied the assistant waiting for his master's return in a cab opposite the house. Thus the projected crime became impossible.

" *We are unlucky,*" said the doctor when he returned to the surgery ; " the countess cannot come, but I'll make another appointment for to-morrow."

The next day the jeweller was astounded to learn that the ring had been sold to a colleague for fifteen thousand francs. He immediately presented the doctor's cheque at the bank and learned that the account was overdrawn. Together with his friend he called at the rue Senac and threatened the doctor with the police. The money had already gone the way of the rest, but upon receiving a signed promise from the doctor agreeing to pay the full amount the next day the jeweller decided to wait.

Desperate, cornered, with arrest staring him in the face, Dr. Bougrat made a last attempt to obtain the money needed for flight. A friend, M. Bonnett, had received fifteen

Dr. Bougrat in Court.

thousand francs that day from an uncle and was celebrating the windfall at the Café Riche. Dr. Bougrat was one of the party. Whilst they were chatting a waiter came and informed M. Bonnett, who was well known, that a lady wished to speak to him on the telephone. Much surprised, M. Bonnett rose and went to the instrument, but the caller had meanwhile rung off. It was later proven that the *lady* was Andrea. Bonnett returned just in time to see Bougrat drop something in his wine. Thoroughly frightened now, Bonnett succeeded in upsetting his glass, to the evident annoyance of the doctor, who left shortly after. It was his last night of freedom; the next morning, when he was already seated in the Paris train, he was arrested on a warrant for uttering bogus cheques and sent to the Chave prison.

A CLUE FROM EDGAR ALLAN POE.

I WAS with the detectives who searched the flat in the rue Senac, for ugly rumours were now circulating. Nothing unusual was found, and we were about to leave when I happened to pick up a book which was lying on the surgery table. It was a translation by Baudelaire of Edgar Allan Poe. The book was open at the tale of "The Black Cat," and the page relating how the body was walled up in the cellar was marked in pencil. Seized with a sudden intuition, I pointed this out to the Sûreté chief. The servants were questioned, and the cook, Fernande, after examining the walls, stated that there had been a recess above the medicine cupboard, but that it was now papered over. Bougrat was at once sent for. Handcuffed, dishevelled, and deathly pale, he was led in by a gendarme.

"Bougrat," said the chief, "what have you hidden up there? Is it the body of your friend Rumèbe?"

"No, no," the doctor yelled hoarsely, starting back. "There is nothing there."

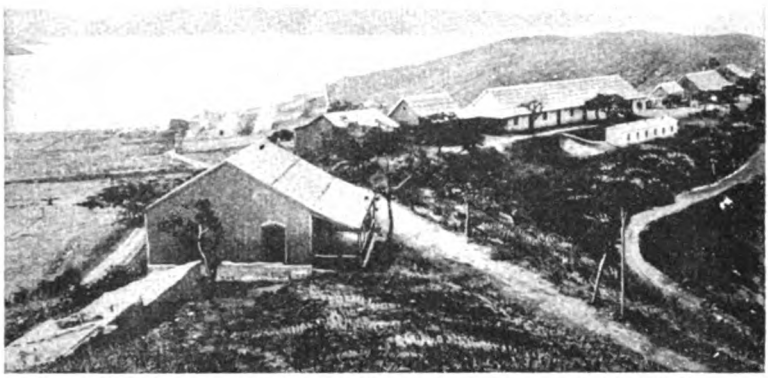
"Well, we shall see," replied M. Robert, and immediately a detective climbed a ladder which had been fetched from the passage, and began prising out the bricks with a hammer and chisel. Wild screams burst from the prisoner as brick after brick was dislodged. In a few minutes the ghastly truth was laid bare. The recess contained the body of Jacques Rumèbe!

Questioned by the Juge d'Instruction, who had been summoned, Bougrat related a fantastic story. His friend had come to

Here Dr. Bougrat changed into *apache's* clothes, and here Odette Lepocal was imprisoned.

The doors were smashed by the police, and Mr. Ashton-Wolfe is seen at the barred window.

him in a terrible state of agitation. He had been robbed of the money he carried to pay the workmen, and in despair implored the doctor to lend him the missing sum. Dr. Bougrat had rushed out hoping to borrow it from a friend, but in vain. When he returned he found Rumèbe dying and by his side was a bottle of cyanide tablets which the unhappy man had taken from the poison cupboard. Terrified at the thought of his own danger he had at once administered restoratives, but his friend had died in a few minutes. He had thereupon hidden the body in the wall.



The penal colony in Cayenne where Dr. Bougrat will end his days.

"How did you carry the body of a heavy man up the ladder?" the judge asked. "Someone must have helped you."

"Oh, no," was the surprising answer. "I slung Rumèbe over my shoulders as a hunter carries big game, and crawled up the ladder like a crab."

ARREST OF THE NERVI.

THE discovery of the body stirred the town to wild excitement. The police had meanwhile taken possession of the flat and arrested the girl Andrea. Whilst we were searching among the papers of the doctor, the door of the laboratory opened a few inches and a sly, bestial face peeped in; it was "the Panther" come for his monthly wage. At sight of the police the door instantly slammed shut, but we were after him with a rush. The chase lasted several hours, for the wily creature knew all the runways of the harbour side. We had almost lost him in the dark when we saw a motor-boat glide swiftly towards the open sea. At once we tumbled into a police launch and followed, keeping well hidden in the shadows. We were thus able to land unseen and watched the *apache* enter a little ramshackle building near the shore. As soon as the reinforcements we had sent for arrived, we surrounded the house and battered down the doors.

Lying strapped to a bed was the unfortunate Greek girl, and we learned her story. The *apache* was, of course, arrested, but denied all complicity in the murder of Rumèbe.

Charged with a long list of crimes, but above all with the murder of Rumèbe, who it was found had succumbed to an injection of cyanide, Dr. Bougrat made a last attempt whilst in prison to manufacture an alibi. A noted forger named Maurice Bouchard gave evidence at the trial to the effect that he had written two letters at the doctor's request. One in a woman's hand, and signed with a fictitious name, was to prove that Dr. Bougrat had called on the fatal Saturday and asked her to lend him nine thousand francs. The other purported to be from an Algerian who had died in the prison, and who admitted in the letter that he had attacked and robbed Rumèbe. This evidence was the last straw. The jury found Dr. Bougrat guilty and he was sentenced to be guillotined.

The sentence was commuted to deportation for life to the penal settlements of Cayenne, where Bougrat is to be sent immediately.

Since he is a doctor, he may perhaps redeem his evil past by tending his fellow-convicts.

(*Next month: "The Footprints on the Ceiling."*)

MRS. BUNTING GOES TO ROME

By

GERTRUDE E. JENNINGS

(Author of "The Young Person in Pink.")

Illustrated by
FRED PURVIS.

"ROME, indeed!" said Mrs. Bunting, with a snort of defiance. "Don't talk to me about Rome! I wish it had never been built!" And she glanced indignantly at little Miss Wimbird, as though that poor lady were entirely responsible for the place.

"Oh," said Miss Wimbird, faintly. "Didn't you like Rome? It's been the dream of my life to go there."

"You wouldn't say so if you'd been through what I have," said Mrs. Bunting, with sinister emphasis. "Of all places that Mr. Bunting has sent me off to, I look on Rome as the worst. Yes! I say that, even taking Venice into account, and that's a nasty, dirty spot, if you like! Oh, the comfort it is to me, Emily, to find myself back in my own beautiful drawing-room with all my home comforts, and none of that dratted sight-seeing, let alone the dangers we've been through! If you would only get it out of your head that there's any pleasure in travelling abroad you'd be a happier woman, you would indeed."

"I know you often tell me so, dear Mrs. Bunting," murmured Miss Wimbird, "but I've always longed to travel since I was a girl, and I expect I always shall."

"Well, you can take it from me there's nothing in it," said Mrs. Bunting, firmly. "And my belief is that it's only vanity makes people go in for it. Stands to reason. They like to come back and brag of what they've seen. Well, what I say is, let's all look at photographs and brag at home. I've always said, and always shall, that England's good enough for me. Now, look at this room!"

Mrs. Bunting paused, and gazed around at the substantial comforts of her large Portland Place drawing-room. The connoisseur would have paled at its appearance, but it was undeniably solid. Everything was on a magnificent scale. The heavy furniture, the soft carpet, the large gold picture frames, all spelt money; and as for taste, that is well known to be a matter of opinion. At any rate, if houses are the shells we build around us, Mrs. Bunting's shell fitted her, for she was large herself, and sumptuously clothed in purple satin. Perhaps it didn't suit her accent or her round, good-natured face, but one must not expect too much of a mere shell. Some such thoughts passed through the mind of Miss Wimbird as she followed Mrs. Bunting's gaze round the room.

Little Miss Wimbird was sincerely fond of the good, fat lady and anxious to help her "live up to her position," as Mr. Bunting called it. But she never criticized her house.

"I think it's a beautiful room," said Mrs. Bunting. "I never saw such a room in Rome, I can tell you that." Miss Wimbird quite believed her. "And, oh, the comfort of a real fire!" continued Mrs. Bunting. "A thing I never saw from first to last. Have another cup of tea, dear? No? Well, then, I'll get them to clear away, for I've more to tell you than you can possibly imagine, and I don't want any interruption. Oh, my dear, you'd never believe all I've been through since you saw us off at Victoria three weeks ago! Ah, I wonder I'm here to tell you! And there's only one thing I say, and that's to hope and pray Mr. Bunting will now quiet down, and won't insist on me dragging myself any more over the Continent. Give us peace, that's what

I say. But there's no managing my husband when once he's got an idea in his head. Him having made money, he thinks the girls ought to travel, and not being able to get away himself, I'm to take them. If I've told him once, I've told him a hundred times that all Ethel and Amy do when they go abroad is to get into love affairs, which they can just as well do at home, and better, for it's not with them mysterious foreigners. Take away the tea, Edward."

"But I thought Ethel was so interested in Art," said Miss Wimbird.

"Make it artists, and you've got it," came with promptness in reply. "Ah, Emily, many's the time I've thanked you for taking Ethel to the National Gallery and keeping her quiet; but now — I have my doubts as to whether she hadn't better have been dancing with Amy. Not as I wish——"

"*That* I wish," hinted Miss Wimbird.

"Thank you, Emily. *That* I wish to say a word against Ethel. Far be it! My Ethel's as sweet a girl as ever was, but this everlasting Art hasn't done her any good. No, it hasn't; as you'll agree when you hear my story. It's given her a kind of craving, and she backs her father up in sending us on these horrid trips. As to Amy, she's pleased enough to go, but Amy's happy anywhere if there's a gramophone and a young man, which is as it should be. But Ethel, now she's taken to this Art, is all for travel, and I must say I do hate to be a bugbear. Fer once you're a bugbear to your children, you may just as well be dead. I do like happy faces round me.

"I s'pose really the evil day of this travel began when Mr. Bunting decided that it was smart to go on the Continent. Oh, Emily, dear, if you hadn't had an aged mother to see to, how gladly would I have said to you: 'Emily, *you* go.' For I could have trusted you with the girls anywhere, you being such a lady and known us since Streatham! How 'appy—beg pardon—how happy I should have been, dear Emily, to have seen *you* off at Victoria, knowing you was keen on going——"

"*Were* keen," murmured Miss Wimbird.

"Were keen; thank you, dear. But never mind learning me my words while I'm telling you, or we shall never get finished before the girls come in. And I don't want Ethel to hear. But tell you about it I must, for I'm fairly bursting with it."

"Oh, I'm longing to hear everything, dear Mrs. Bunting," said Miss Wimbird.

She was one of those rare souls who like to hear other people describe their tours. She really liked it. There was no pretence.

"Tell me everything," she repeated. "What did you think of the Colosseum?"

"Well, if you ask *me*," said Mrs. Bunting, "it's not a patch on the one in London. Though of course it may have bin as good when new. That I can't say, as it's bin kept in very bad repair. However, it's better than that place they call the Forum, which is neither more nor less than heaps of stones. Oh, Emily, the time I spent in that cold place, being told the name of every block and boulder, you

"Rome, indeed!" said Mrs. Bunting. "Don't talk to me about Rome."

wouldn't believe! It was *all* on account of Signor Jillyolio."

"Signor—— ?"

"Jillyolio," repeated Mrs. Bunting, firmly. "That's 'is name. Go abroad, and that's what you get. Means a Lily. Not that he was much like a lily, being as black as jet. But handsome! Well, you'd hardly believe how handsome that young man was. And a perfect gentleman! I can't bear him any ill-feeling, in spite of all that happened. Yes, even counting that day in the Forum, and worse, as you shall hear.

"Well, I must tell you that if it hadn't been for the Signor we should have got through Rome pretty well. We drove round the town one morning just to see it, and after that we took our drives in the Pincho Gardens, as it was quieter. There were nice dances at the Grand, and pleasant company, too. Mr. and Mrs. Davies were staying at our hotel, and Mrs. Davies, being a martyr to rheumatism, was glad of my company. Ethel and Amy soon made friends. They gave us real English tea, and altogether we were pretty comfortable. As I said to Mrs. Davies, we might almost as well be at home. I sent the girls shopping every morning, knowing they would come to no harm, being thin. You see, I couldn't go, for the pavements in Rome are so narrow I should have been swep' away by the trams. So all went well for the first week.

"THEN one fine day Ethel went to a tea dance and was introduced to this Signor Jillyolio, and after that peace was at an end. It seems he told Ethel that for us to be in Rome so long and not see the sights was a dirty shame. For I must tell you he spoke English quite beautiful, as well as you or me. Well, Ethel brought him up next day and introduced him, and he told me the same thing over again.

"I said to him, 'Signor Jillyolio,' I said, 'we have seen Rome from end to end. We have taken a taxi and at the risk of our lives we have seen the Coliseum, the Forum, the Cemetery, St. Peter's, the Fountain of Trevy, the Place d'Espag-something, and the Parthian, forty or so churches, and somcone's Baths, and a long morning it was.' 'Mrs. Bunting,' he says, 'you *can* only have seen the outside,' which I agree. Well, backed up by Ethel, he then and there arranged to take us all round the whole list of them places again. Would you believe it? And worse—he found a lot of others that we had never heard of! And there was no sitting peacefully in the taxi. Not a bit of it. Up and out, and into whatever it was. One of the worst of them was the Vulgate, where the Pope lives."

"Surely not the Vulgate, dear Mrs. Bunting?" interposed Miss Wimbird, mildly. "I think you mean the Vatican."

"Well, Vatican or Vulgate, it's all the same. How the Pope can feel easy living in such a place I don't know. Nothing but a heap of pictures and statues. Not a bit home-like! Statues are all very well. I like Peter Pan and the Albert Memorial and that grand erection opposite Buckingham Palace. But these statues weren't a bit like that. Some of them weren't even what I call decent. Especially one that turned round and round. Ah, you may stare! But it did! I liked the Cistern Chapel better, though it was dark as pitch, and Signor Jillyolio spoilt all my pleasure by making me 'old my 'ead back to look at the ceiling, which was all covered with pictures. Why they wanted to paint views on their ceilings I can't understand, unless the Ancient Romans lay all day on their backs. I got a awful headache. Well, just as I was praying it was lunch time he said there was just time for St. Peter's, and to St. Peter's we went.

"Wasn't I impressed? Oh, well, I must say it is a large church. Yes! It *is* large. There's no denying that. They've got some baby Cupids in it as big as giants, and then there's St. Peter's Toe. It wasn't so bad. After that we had lunch. I was just saying I'd have a little lie down when their faces fell, so I felt like Nero. He was the one who built St. Peter's and then burned it down. Well, you know, I couldn't let the girls go off with a strange Signor, so I swallowed my headache, and away we went again. Let's see! Where did we go? Ah, I know. The Palatine. Dreadful, my dear! Just another Forum! A lot of ruins! Luckily Signor Jillyolio didn't know quite as much about them as he knew about the Forum, but, then, it was larger. It was there I noticed he couldn't take his eyes off Ethel. 'But never mind,' I said to myself, 'she's a lovely girl, and being fair and him so dark he'd natcherlly admire her.' I can't say I felt uneasy except in my feet, and I went home and went to bed. Next day, dear, that energetic young Italian gentleman—for he *was* a gentleman! Yes, he *was* a gentleman, in his foreign way, no one can deny that; and he proved it in the end, as you shall hear.

"Where was I? Oh, next day. He was on the mat at ten o'clock, and off we went to the Capitol, which is nothing more or less than another lot of statues all much the same as the Vulgate. But I will say he did show me something quite pretty on the way, an' which I must tell you was up ever so many steps. Well, there was a cage there, and he said—you must excuse the freedom of it, dear, for I know he didn't mean to be

vulgar, him being a foreigner, and I having learnt to make allowances for such. So I'm sure you'll understand, though I *did* think it a little outspoken for the two girls. Well, he pointed at a cage by the side of the steps, and he said that in that cage were two bears that were the lineal descendants of the bears that suckled Romeo and Juliet. There! What do you think of that?"

"I think it's marvellous," said Miss Wimbird, with a gulp. "But don't you mean Romulus and Remus? And weren't they wolves?"

"Well, as to that I can't say," replied Mrs. Bunting, "for they never came out, so bears or wolves I shall never know. All I do know is we saw a fearful lot more statues. I don't remember what they were about. In fact, the lady that turned round might have been in there and not at the Vulgate. Was she? Never mind.

"After lunch we went inside the Coliseum, which wasn't so bad, for it was a nice bright day, though cold, as it always is in Rome, dear, and don't you believe what anyone tells you to the contrary. Well, I said, 'I can't climb those stairs,' and Ethel and the Signor went up and Amy and me had a good sit down. Amy was tired, and went into a sort of doze, and it would have been quite happy and peaceful only for the guides. I must tell you that the guides spring up out of the ground anywhere in Rome and pour out a lot of talk about something being moulting interesting. 'Owever, I shook my umbrella at them, and they went away at last. Then I tried to make out Ethel and the Signor. I was getting a bit worried about Ethel, for I had overheard him calling her Rose of the World while passing the macaroni, and she flushed and looked a bit soft. Not that I minded him calling her Rose, that not being her real name, if only she'd have laughed it off. It was that blush frightened me. And I thought p'r'aps I'd bin wrong to let them climb up the Coliseum and not even in my sight. 'Owever, I sat quiet and 'oped for the best. Presently along comes Mr. Davies, who is for ever prowling round those places with his Hares and his Baedeckers. He sat down beside me and asked me if it wasn't glorious, meaning the Coliseum. I said yes it *did* look very pretty in the sunlight. Then he opened his Baedecker, and my heart fell. I took my courage in both hands and begged him not to tell us anything historical, which he is apt to do if not checked. For I said to myself, 'One of you's enough at that game.' So he promised me he wouldn't, and instead he told me about a girl called Daisy Something who went into the Coliseum by moonlight with a young Italian, and her young man broke off her engagement and she died. Oh, thinks I, that tale will do for *you*, Miss Ethel! Not that, thought I, Ethel would ever think of going into the Coliseum by moonlight, not the Roman Coliseum—that is. I don't say the London, where one can go at any time when open. But, in fact, much worse happened in the end, as you shall hear.

"WELL, Ethel and Signor Jillyolio came back after a very long time, and we went to the Golden House of Nero, which is a 'orrible fraud. It's not gold at all, but just like a lot of large barns all leaking and dripping with water, and they showed us Poppy's bath. Poppy was his wife, and it seems she bathed in asses' milk. A good many things the Ancient Romans did were most unnatural, and their bathing arrangements were not the least of it, for they seemed always to be in the open, so to speak, and how they stood the cold winds, not to say the sightseers, I can't say. They tell me this Golden House hasn't been dug out very long, and all I can say is, better have left it where it was, for it fairly gave me the creeps. Oh, how glad I was to go back to the hotel and get to bed, Mrs. Davies kindly looking after the girls. If Mrs. Davies hadn't been so lame I should have tried to entice her to take my place in the excursions, but what can you do when crippled with rheumatism? Which only shows you how Providence makes up to the afflicted, for Mrs. Davies was able to sit all day long in the hotel, instead of being shown history by her husband.

"Amy by now had got hold of four or five nice young men, but Ethel danced all the evening with the Signor. I dropped her two or three tactful hints, but of course you can't say anything to girls nowadays. Mrs. Davies and I agreed about that. Well, after that I don't know exactly how the days went, but I do know we saw a terrible lot of churches. I couldn't tell you their names, except one was St. Bocca, and he had a stone face with its mouth open and you mustn't put your hand inside if you're going to tell a lie because it shuts up. That's the only thing I really do remember about the churches in Rome. But I must tell you that Signor Jillyolio had a mania for crypts. Just when I'd think the whole thing was done with and we'd get away, he'd go to no end of trouble to find a crypt—a nasty place at the best of times, and if you've seen one you've seen all.

"Well, dear, when I was fairly worn out with churches he took us off to see a holy staircase. This staircase, I must tell you, was brought from Egypt by Nero, and it's the custom in Rome for people to go up it on all fours. On their hands and knees, you

know. But thank goodness I wasn't asked to do so, being by birth a Unitarian. Did we see the Castle of St. Angelo? I don't remember, dear. Was it the same as the Pantheon Rock? Because we saw that. All this time I must tell you we never went to the one really pretty building in Rome, which is the Victor Emmanuel Memorial. A very handsome bit of work, and properly cleaned. But Signor Jillyolio said there was nothing to see. Well!

"Time was drawing to an end, and there was only three days left, and what with one thing and another I was half off my head with joy at the thought of getting safely back home. Signor Jillyolio's manner by now was quite unmistakable, and Ethel wasn't very much better. It was Romeo and Juliet, I do assure you. The way that man looked at her was reely lovely, if it hadn't been so unsuitable. There was none of that tomboy joking such as goes on at home, if you follow me. None of what is vulgarly known as the slap and tickle. No, indeed! He seemed to look on her as something so wonderful and rare and precious that he was like on his knees to her. Yet there was a sort of smothered-up fire in him, too. Oh, I could see it was time we got away.

"Well, one fine day we set off to see the Catscombs. From what I could make out, it was just another old crypt, but it was a deal worse, as you shall hear. It was a feverish drive over the most cruel bumpy road, and then we walked along a path, and were introduced to a monk. He gave us each a small taper and told us to follow him. There was a large party beside us, which only shows you what people will do when sightseeing, for a more awful place you never seen. You go down a whole lot of broken steps into some coal-mines, or as like as doesn't matter. Anyway, pitch-black passages, and in the sides there are sort of shelves. And it seems they were made thousands of years ago to bury Christians who were eaten by lions. That's a cheerful sort of entertainment to bring young girls to!

"There was a nice American lady in the party, and she told me there was seven hundred miles of it. That finished me. 'Thank you,' says I. 'I'm going out of this.' For one thing, a young man follering me had dropped grease over my purple velvet, and letting that alone, the whole place gave me the horrors and the creeps like as I never had before, and hope I never shall again. For bear in mind, Emily, that it was as black as your hat, not as much as a jet of gas anywhere, let alone electricity, nothing but them guttering tapers and seven hundred miles of it! Well, I stopped short and said I wasn't going another yard, and if people wanted to go into the bowels of the earth in order to view bones, I, for one, and my daughters were returning to the light of day. Well, there was a great commotion, and the passage being very narrow those ahead couldn't tell what was up, and those behind said go on or we shall get lost. Now I hadn't as much as thought of getting lost, but when I heard that I began to cry. And Signor Jillyolio got all hot and bothered and said there wasn't very much more of it, and I said enough was as good as a feast, and that if people wanted to be buried in such places let them, but I for one was going out. I'm well aware, dear Emily, that that ghastly place was meant only for those who had been eaten by lions, and lions I knew were not there any longer, but rules are made to be broken, and I'd a fancy that I'd prefer my bones left quietly at home.

"WELL, the girls were so surprised at my really putting my foot down for once that they agreed to come out, and Signor Jillyolio, who is really quite a gentleman, gave me his arm and helped me up the steps. I sunk all in a heap and had to have the salts, after which we went back to the hotel. I took to my bed, and Amy very kindly offered to cheer me up by reading me the *Daily Mail*. Oh, the relief it was! Ethel and Signor Jillyolio went to have tea with Mrs. Davies. And, says I to meself, that's the last place I visit with you, and I hope I get Ethel home without any entanglement, for a man who can take anyone to such a place is clean out of his senses, let alone being a foreigner. It's no way of courting, and you can't say it is. Amy was so good and kind that I took courage to ask her if she thought Ethel was serious about Signor Jillyolio, and, if so, how was I to face her father, but I couldn't get much out of her. My girls are so deep.

"Well, I must have dropped off into a sleep, for I had a most awful dream about being a lion and being chased all round the Catscombs by Christians, which of course shows how upset I was, for it's not a thing likely to happen, even in those days. I woke up with a start, and there was Amy standing by me and saying it was half-past seven and hadn't I better dress for dinner. 'Where's Ethel?' says I. 'Oh,' she says, 'she's not come in yet. She went off with Signor Jillyolio for a walk.' Well, now, of course girls are pretty free-and-easy nowdays, and I knew better than to try and rule them at home. But abroad rules are strict. 'Still,' I thought, 'she's only on the Pincho and they've got absent-minded.'

"So I dressed, and we went down to dinner, and still no Ethel. Mrs. Davies, I may tell you, had made a great effort and gone out to dinner and to the pictures. Well,

we dined and still no Ethel. Nine o'clock came, and still no Ethel. Then I began to fret in real earnest, and I sent Amy to telephone to Signor Jillyolio. I must tell you that the telephone is a bad business in Rome, for you can easily be half an hour at it. However, Amy came back at last, and said that the Signor was not in his hotel. Meanwhile Mr. Davies had gallantly rung up the hospitals and that had no result. It was ten o'clock, and no Ethel. I knew, Emily, dear, that it was no use having my palpitations, so I put on my hat and went to find Mrs. Davies, fer luckily Charlie Chaplin was on, and I knew where *he* was there would she be. And sure enough we found her. And what do you think she said? Why, that Ethel had told her she must and would see the Catscombs, and she hadn't stopped for tea but had set off with the Signor!

"'But what,' I asked all and sundry, 'is she doing in the Catscombs for six hours?' And then the awful thought struck me. She had lost her way! She was wandering about all alone, or with the Signor—one idea was near as bad as the other—in seven hundred miles of mines. I beat down my palpitations and went back to fetch Mr. Davies, who was still gallantly ringing up the hospitals, and off we went to those Catscombs, Mr. Davies being a tower of strength and keeping well off history, only to assure me that no one had ever been lost in the Catscombs as the monks were most careful. 'But what are they doing in the Catscombs if not lost?' said I. 'For no one could go there to make love.' Well, dear Emily, there's more than one entrance to those places, but we went to the same one, which begins with an X. We found the monks were all asleep, for it seems it's holy to go to bed early; in fact, we were a long time finding them—only Mr. Davies, who was a tower of strength, knew where they were. They said several large parties had been down, but they were quite sure no one had been left behind. But by that time I was quite beside myself, and go and see for myself I would. Yes, Emily, down into that place I went again, and I wouldn't let my flesh creep, on account of finding Ethel. It wasn't any darker than in the daytime, because it couldn't be, but Mr. Davies, who was a tower of strength, had an electric torch. But what it was like no tongue can tell, for, though not believing in ghosts, I couldn't help but think I'd meet a lion or a Christian or even Nero at every turn. And the thought of seven hundred miles of it sat heavy on me. The monk assured me—for he could speak English—that no one could get out of the bit we were in, but I don't know. He's a holy man—but I shall never know.

"He went on to say in the most gentlemanly manner that he had the greatest admiration for my daughter."

"Well, we came up at last into the moonlight, and we got into the taxi, and no one said a word. And the way home was by the Coliseum. And as we were passing the door

I saw a well-known hat, and it was Ethel and the Signor strolling along as if it was Regent Street. I just gave one screech and then I let my palpitations have their way.

"Well, it broke the ice, so to speak, and I will say poor Ethel was properly frightened. We got her into the cab, leaving Signor Jillyolio, who was struck quite dumb, on the roadway, and we went back at an awful pace to the hotel, where we had no end of a set-to. It seems that when Ethel and the Signor got to the Catscombs they were shut for the day, and he said they'd have a bit of dinner, and after that she said, 'Let's see the Coliseum by moonlight.' This she said forgetting all I had told her about the girl Daisy. Then it seems he told her the story of his life, though why he should want to go to the Coliseum to do that I don't know. He could have told her just as easily in the hotel lounge. Ethel's manner was very queer, and it seemed to me she'd been crying. Of course I didn't like to ask if they were engaged, but it was borne in upon me that she would have to marry him, on account of all the to-do. For the concierge by that time had got on to the hospitals and the hotel was all in a buzz. Ethel took it all very quietly, and there was a queer, far-away look in her eyes which might have meant anything. Mr. Davies drew me to one side and told me that in his opinion we had seen the last of Signor Jillyolio.

"But we hadn't at all, for next morning at ten o'clock he sent up his card and asked if he might see me alone. My heart went down into my boots, for I thought, now it's come! And I shall have to greet Mr. Bunting with the news that Ethel was going to be Mrs. Jillyolio. But it was nothing of the kind.

"No, my dear! He began by telling me how desolated he was for having caused me so much anxiety, and that he would never forgive himself. And he went on to say in the most gentlemanly manner that he had the greatest admiration for my daughter, who he said was like one of the heavenly angels, so good and so beautiful, but he said he hadn't a penny in the world and he didn't think it honourable to ask such a rich young lady to marry him. But, he said, he would hold her in 'is 'eart like a lovely memory for ever and evermore. Indeed, it was reely more like poetry than English, my dear, and the tears came into my eyes.

"Then he kissed my hand most beautifully and he went away and we never saw him again. It wasn't till we were on our way home that Ethel told me that he was a married man. I thought it very sweet of her to confide in me, but I think she wanted a bit of comfort, and her old mother was glad enough to give it to her. Of course, she hadn't known till that moonlight night in the Coliseum, when he told her the story of his life. Poor young man!"

And Mrs. Bunting wiped away a tear.

"I DON'T see why you pity him, and I don't think he was such a gentleman after all," observed Miss Wimbird.

"Oh, yes, he was, dear, for you mustn't judge by our rules, and love in Italy is ever so much worse than it is here. And I know well enough that he truly loved Ethel. Still, there's no doubt that his wife was a blessing in disguise, for it would never have answered, never. Their ways are not our ways. And let alone all else, he would never have shaken off the feeling that he must be showing us something. Even though, thank 'Evin, there's no Catscombs in London, and our Coliseum so bright and cheerful, you may be quite sure he'd have found something 'istorical.

"And now I've told you all about Rome, you can understand my feelings. All I can feel about it is that we've polished it off and never will we have to go there again. Times at night even now I've laid thinking of them Catscombs and Ethel perhaps crouching in a corner thinking of Christians, though all the time she was reely listening to Signor Jillyolio tell the story of his life.

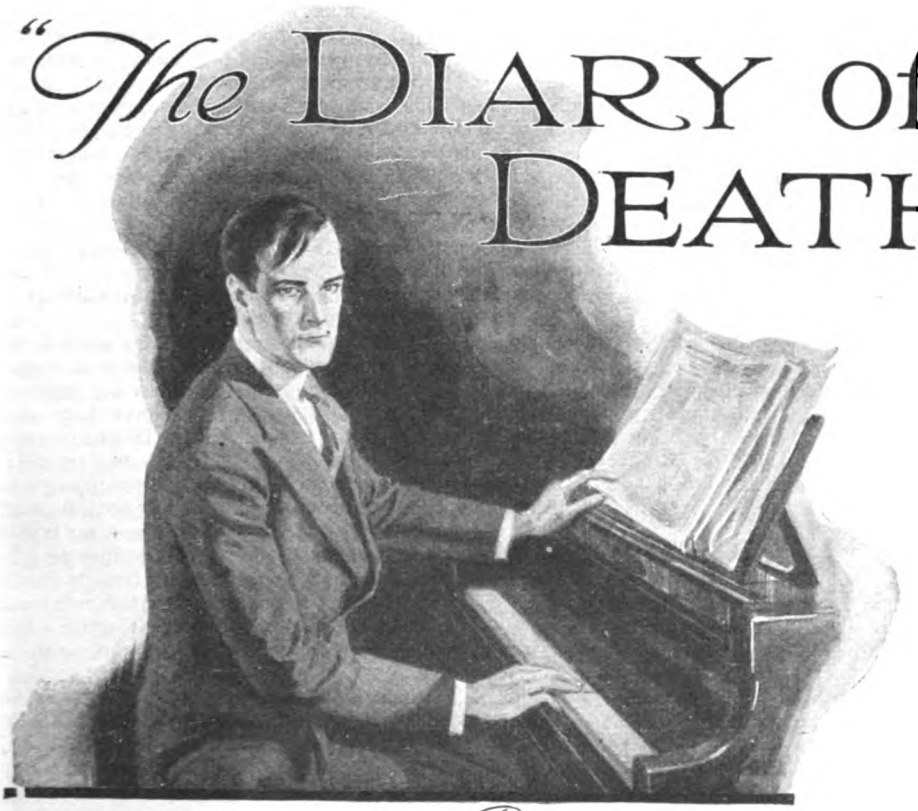
"Oh, yes, she'll get over it. She's rather mopey, but there's a young poet of the name of Fred Something that's bin writing her verses, and that's pleased her.

"You won't mention any of this to Ethel, of course, for we never speak of it. Thank you very much, dear Emily, for all your sympathy.

"Oh, must you go? Well, drop in again soon and give me a lesson in me speech. I must keep up with Mr. Bunting and the girls. And I do 'ope you feel, after all I've bin telling you, that there's one place in the world you don't want to see, and that place is Rome."

THE CRIME-PREVENTERS.—I.

"The DIARY of DEATH"



By MARTEN CUMBERLAND

Illustrated by
CONRAD LEIGH

"CONFESS, my brother," said Cleta, "that you are just a little bit of a crank. You refuse to help Inspector Comfort in most of his important cases, and yet I have known you give a whole week to some trumpery affair of a broken-down actor."

She set down her empty coffee-cup upon the breakfast table, and rose to get a cigarette.

"Your attitude towards life is paradoxical," she accused him.

Loreto Santos twirled round upon the music-stool and looked at his beautiful sister with laughter in his light grey eyes.

"Paradoxical!" he repeated. "Well—perhaps. But time turns our most outlandish paradoxes into truisms. When you speak of my attitude towards life you really refer to my position with regard to crime. That is very simple. Like all the best thinkers on the subject, I am concerned only with prevention, and never, or seldom, with punishment. I don't believe in social revenge. Anyway, *chiquita*, my interest in crime is purely intellectual. If I can outwit and frustrate the criminal, I am interested; if the crime is already committed, I am bored. Why should I—a man of absurd wealth—play the part of policeman? No, I leave that to friend Comfort, and I go my own sweet way. As for the 'Death Diary' murders, they interest me, but I want a holiday. We are due at Lady Groombridge's

next week, and Comfort must play the sleuth by himself. *Voilà tout.*"

He turned to the piano with a shrug of his broad shoulders, as though he dismissed the whole discussion. Soon there flowed from beneath his fingers the majestic swelling strains of a choral prelude by Bach.

Cleta Santos leant back in a deep arm-chair, and, whilst listening appreciatively to the music, gazed with a certain wonder at her brother's broad back.

Loreto was continually a source of perplexity to his sister, and to most of the people who came in contact with him. Born in the Argentine of Spanish parents, Loreto had been educated in England, and on the death of his parents he had made his home in Europe.

With his sister, who was many years younger than himself, Loreto had lived in several European capitals before finally settling down in London in the big house overlooking Regent's Park. Here his vast wealth and various gifts, intellectual and artistic, together with Cleta's beauty, had made them welcome in certain charming circles of society.

At first Loreto had lived merely as a dilettante, a fine amateur pianist who patronized various arts; then by mere chance his attention had been drawn to a certain notorious crime, and his great gifts as a criminologist had come to light.

Subsequently he had interested himself considerably in crime—crime, that is, as a battle of wits. A kind of chess problem to be worked out—and always Santos was concerned only with the anticipation of criminal events.

The man, too, was a philanthropist of the highest order, and his vast scheme for aiding first offenders upon their liberation from prison had cost him thousands. His attitude towards the criminal was, in fact, most humane, though it never degenerated into the sentimental.

Cleta, listening to his music, smiled to herself. She knew that Loreto's mind was not entirely absorbed by his playing, for upon the otherwise bare music-holder was propped a newspaper, and it was folded at the latest report of what had become known as the "Death Diary Murders."

IT was inevitable that the conversation at Lady Groombridge's dinner-table should turn upon the "Death Diary Murders." The newspapers were full of the affair at the time, and probably regretted having used up their superlatives on so many minor events.

"Of course the murderer must be mad, and poor Lilian Hope was undoubtedly insane in her declining years," declared Lady Groombridge, glaring round the table.

Lady Groombridge, somehow, always had this appearance of glaring, even in her mildest moments. She was one of those strong but by no means silent women whose views are invariably decided, especially when they are incorrect.

"These murders are the blind, unreasoning crimes of a lunatic," she resumed. "They are without motive, and that is why they have baffled the police. The very cunning of them is the cunning of a lunatic." Her keen eyes roved around the table, and fell upon Loreto Santos. "Don't you agree with me, Mr. Santos?" she urged. "You are the expert upon these dreadful matters."

Loreto nodded gravely.

"I think most murderers are mad," he said. "Certainly this vendetta and these killings are insensate. There is no faintest reason for such revenge. I have seen the pages torn from poor Lilian Hope's diary, and obviously what she wrote was merely the outpourings of a bitter and disappointed woman—a woman beside herself with illness, poverty, and suffering. There was no truth in the accusations she brought against people who had always been her loyal friends."

A little murmur ran round the table at his words, and a voice, speaking English with a slight French accent, broke out with a question:—

"Who was Lilian Hope, and what exactly are these murders you speak of?"

The questioner was Otisse—Henri Otisse, the explorer, who had just returned from the upper reaches of the Amazon. His small, dark head and yellow, sun-scorched face were turned inquiringly around, and immediately a storm of verbal explanation broke out from the assembled diners.

Through all this buzzing, Lady Groombridge's resolute voice boomed out, and dispersed the others as a motor-horn scatters a flock of roadside chickens.

"My dear Mr. Otisse," she exclaimed, "you are probably the only man in England who doesn't know the whole pitiable story. Poor Lilian Hope was once one of our famous English beauties. She was a musical comedy singer, and though her voice was not really fine, her loveliness made one forget that. She was one of the first to have a picture postcard vogue, though she must have been nearly forty at that time. People would wait hours to see her get into her carriage, she was so popular. She had many exalted friends and walked with kings, and yet at the end she disappeared into obscurity and direst poverty. Some say she sold flowers in Piccadilly. It is true that she died in a miserable garret, where she had lived for years under another name."

"But her diary?" asked Otisse, pulling at his small dark moustache. "This diary that they call in the journals the 'Diary of Death'—how did she come to write that, and to whom did she leave it?"

"That is the mystery," announced Lady Groombridge. "Lilian Hope died in such obscurity that it has been impossible so far to trace the few miserable possessions that she left behind. In her last years she apparently kept a diary in which she poured out vindictive and bitter accusations against her former friends. She stated that these friends had abandoned her, scorned her, refused her the slightest assistance.

"Of course, the poor woman was beside herself with illness and want. Her friends would have helped her if they had known where she was. Lilian Hope's wild accusations were without foundation, but they have resulted in terrible consequences. Somehow, her diary has come into the possession of an avenger, a man—if it is a man—more insane than poor Lilian Hope ever was."

Henri Otisse nodded quickly.

"I read a little in the journals," he said. "Someone has already killed two of these people said to have refused aid to Lilian Hope, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Lady Groombridge sipped her wine and glared at her attentive guests.

"Yes. Already two worthy and respectable people have been struck down by this unknown madman. Two have been killed in three months. Dr. Stapleton Clarke, a fine old man and a real philanthropist, was found shot in his study, and beside him was a page torn from Lilian Hope's diary; a page in which she accused the poor man, in the wildest language, of callous indifference to her sufferings, and refusal to give her financial assistance. As though the old doctor would refuse anyone help, least of all a woman with whom he had once been upon terms of friendship! The writing found beside that old man's body was hysterical and insane.

"The same thing applies to the murder of poor old Isidore Gorden. He was for years the manager of the Beaumont Theatre, and a kinder man never lived, yet he was found stabbed in the garden of his house at Maidenhead, and an equally hysterical accusation, torn from the fatal diary, lay upon his body. Apparently, too, Gorden had received pages of the 'Death Diary'—as the papers call it—several times before he died. Undoubtedly they were sent by the murderer to his victim, and they were enclosed in common envelopes addressed with a typewriter."

"And others are threatened?" asked Otisse. "Has this mad avenger sent other diary pages to fresh victims?"

"One can't tell," replied his hostess. "Dr. Stapleton Clarke probably received pages of the diary, and it is thought he destroyed them without telling anyone about it. Lilian Hope had many friends, and she may have ranted against all of them. It is terrible. There is no knowing who may be the next victim."

"So far there have only been two murders," broke in one of the women guests. "And both have been committed in the last three months. The police have a theory that Lilian Hope's diary has somehow fallen into the hands of an old lover of hers, and this man is carrying out a vendetta. They think that either this murderer has only recently acquired the 'Death Diary,' or else that he has had it ever since Lilian Hope's death, and that he has recently gone out of his mind. You see, only a madman would take this hysterical diary so seriously."

Otisse demurred slightly.

"Surely a man who loved this unfortunate woman might well believe that her diary spoke the truth?" he suggested.

"Not if the man read the diary in the light of reason and common sense," said Loreto Santos. "The diary pages found in poor Gorden's desk were the outpourings of a pathological subject. These writings of Lilian Hope have been submitted to alienists and handwriting experts, and all the authorities are agreed that the poor woman was insane. The reputation of the murdered men was of the highest, and Lilian Hope, if she had been in her right mind, would never have accused her friends as she did. This murderer, of course, is mad."

"Of course," echoed Lady Groombridge. "The whole thing is a terrible tragedy. One wonders who will be next upon this mad creature's list. There is Sir George Frame, who is joining our party to-night—he couldn't arrive in time for dinner—now, who knows, he may be a future victim. Poor old man, he is seventy-two years of age, but he was a close friend of Lilian Hope."

PRESENTLY the long formal dinner was at an end, and Lady Groombridge rose from the table, carrying the women with her. In the billiard-room the men lit their cigars, and Loreto looked about him curiously. Lady Groombridge was a resolute hunter of London's "lions," and the guests were an interesting crowd.

There was Lionel Silk, poet and author of "White Heat," which had been publicly burned in America, and now cost fourteen guineas a volume. He was a slim, mild-looking man, with a bald circle in the midst of his fair hair, and a round schoolboy's face that suggested arrested development. He looked out at the world through sleepy,

lowered eyelids, and a scarlet cigarette-holder nine inches long jutted defiantly from his mouth.

Otisse, the explorer, was telling stories about China and South America to a group of men, all more or less famous or notorious. One of these was a singer named Adam Steele, "boomed" in the newspapers recently as the "Australian Caruso." Steele was a large, bounding, energetic man, broad-shouldered and full of vitality. He had a very beautiful voice, and later, no doubt, he would be expected to sing. Lady Groombridge did not invite her guests for nothing.

Steele strolled across the room and seated himself beside Loreto. The singer had some music in his hands, and he turned to Loreto with a pleasant smile.

"I suppose I shall have to sing later on," he confided, with a humorous grin. "I'm engaged like the extra waiters and the other hirelings. I wonder whether you would mind very much playing some accompaniments for me, Santos? I know you're a big solo pianist, but the fact is my regular accompanist is ill. Lady Groombridge suggested that you might——"

"That lady's word is law," said Loreto, smiling. "Of course, I don't claim to be an accompanist, and I'm not a very good reader. What have you got there? German *Lieder*—h'm! Brahms—he's a bit tricky."

He took the music and turned the pages quickly.

"Well, I think I can manage this for you all right."

Steele thanked the other in his quick, impulsive way, and soon the two men were deep in a musical discussion. Loreto's voice was soft and gravely deliberate; Steele talked excitedly, with animated gesture.

Later, when they rejoined the women, Steele sang and Loreto played indefatigably. Not only did he play the singer's accompaniments, but he played numerous solos, and was glad afterwards to slip away to a corner of the big room for a quiet cigarette and a rest.

His sister Cleta, who had quite a nice drawing-room voice, exquisitely trained, sang some songs of old Spain, while Loreto listened appreciatively. He was sorry when the girl had finished, and Lionel Silk began to recite—or, rather, chant—some fragments from "White Heat."

Seizing a favourable moment, Loreto slipped out and stole along a passage to a cool and empty smoking-room that adjoined the billiard-room.

HE had just lit a fresh cigarette when a very tall old man, with white hair and a scholarly stoop, peered in through the doorway and then entered.

"Hullo!" said the old man, genially. "It's Santos, isn't it? Loreto Santos? Thought it was. My name's Frame. Politician, you know."

He seated himself opposite to Loreto and continued in the same snappy, unconventional fashion.

"Couldn't stand that Silk fellow; slipped out after you. Calls that stuff poetry! Gad! He ought to have been burnt along with his beastly books. Rotten stuff, Santos."

With fingers that shook ever so slightly he drew out a cigar-case, whilst Loreto looked at him curiously.

At seventy-two years of age, Sir George Frame had a fine old face, that still retained traces of an extremely handsome youth. The spluttering match threw a glow about the high and broad forehead, the grey eyes, still keen despite the innumerable fine lines about them, and the firm, well-shaped mouth. Looking at the old man's kindly and dignified face, Loreto understood the other's popularity in the House, his reputation for shrewd statesmanship and vision.

"I'm very pleased to meet you, Sir George," he said, with perfect honesty. "I fancy that you are rather more than a mere politician."

The old man shrugged and dropped his extinguished match into an ash-tray.

"I've tried hard," he said. "I've tried hard. But the number of fools are infinite, as old Carlyle said. Anyway, it doesn't matter now. You play the piano jolly well, Santos, but the musical number for me is 'Nunc dimittis.' I've had a full life. No regrets. Seventy-three next June, but I'll never reach it. Shut the door, my boy, will you?"

A little surprised at the abruptness of the request, Loreto nevertheless rose and closed the smoke-room door securely. When he returned to his seat he noticed that Sir George Frame had moved his chair forward until it was much nearer to that of Loreto.

"Particularly wanted to have a talk with you, Santos," the old man resumed. "Followed your career in the papers, and read your views on crime frustration. Papers got your views wrong, of course, but I understand. You're quite right. Modern society is the greatest criminal of all. Distribution of wealth notoriously unjust. So-called 'justice' a mockery. Organized society makes criminals by the hundred, and then revenges itself upon them—if they're poor. Big thieves get off and get honours. All wrong. Prevention of crime is the great thing—not punishment."

He paused for a moment, and looked at the firm ash on his cigar.

" I'm particularly interested in the prevention of crime," he said, slowly, and in a different tone. " Perhaps you can guess why, Santos ? "

His eyes were lifted meaningly to his listener's face, and in a flash Loreto understood.

" Good God ! " he cried. " You were a friend of Lilian Hope ! You have not been threatened by——"

" Yes," said Sir George, grimly. " I am the next on the list."

He drew a fairly large envelope from his breast pocket and extracted some folded papers. They were dingy and faintly yellow ; one edge of the paper was jagged where it had been torn from the book, and Loreto immediately recognized these sheets as pages from Lilian Hope's fatal diary.

Loreto immediately recognized the sheets as pages from Lilian Hope's fatal diary.

" Poor Lilian ! " murmured the old man. " She was a wonderful creature, and I loved her once, though she never treated me too well. I had her picture—kept it for years, but my wife grew jealous. Poor Lilian ! To think that she was in such poverty, and that she died in such a frame of mind ! "

There was silence in the room for a moment. The old man's cigar had gone out, and he threw it away and fumbled for another. Loreto examined the all-too-human documents in his hand.

" She did once appeal to me for money, Santos," went on the old man. " She never gave me her address, or told me how badly she was situated. She asked me to send her money to the *poste restante* in a big seaside resort. I wrote a letter enclosing money and asking her to let me know if she wanted more. I had no answer. I only learned a year later that my wife had intercepted the letter, and Lilian never received anything."

He sighed faintly and dropped his second cigar into the empty grate.

" Life's a queer thing. Mixture of comic and tragic. Poor Kitty, my wife, was always jealous, and now she'd give a great deal never to have destroyed my letter. I never heard from Lilian again ; could never get in touch with her. And now there comes this bolt from the blue—this poor lunatic

avenging wrongs that are purely imaginary. One poor mad soul driven on by another who is dead."

Loreto nodded gravely.

"It is horrible and pitiably tragic," he said. "I hope you are taking precautions, Sir George?"

The old man chuckled in grim humour.

"Precautions? What—me? My dear Santos, you don't know me. I'm incapable of such a thing. I'm so absent-minded, I lose glasses, umbrellas, books—anything I happen to be carrying. I can't even keep a good cigar alight. I get in wrong trains, forget to post letters, and once I delivered the wrong speech to the wrong set of people. I could never think of precautions. Besides, this sort of thing doesn't worry me. I've had a full life, and I've had enough.

"So far from frightening me, Santos, death appears as a rather pleasant thing. It means rest—utter rest. No, I've lived enough. If this madman wants to get me, he'll get me."

"Still——" began Loreto, but he was interrupted.

He'll get me," repeated Sir George. "He's mad and cunning, and he's not a regular criminal. That's why the police are helpless. You know what police methods are. They can only catch the regulars. Police know all the regulars—got 'em tabbed—know their methods. Crime committed, and the regular must account for himself at the time of the crime. Then their women and pals squeal to the police. But all that sort of thing is no good against a man like this. He's not a regular; he's got no pals. There's no motive and no clue. He's mad, as Jack the Ripper was, and the police never caught Jack."

"But if the police were warned?" suggested Loreto. "If you showed them these diary pages at once——"

The old man shook his head obstinately.

"Don't believe in the police," he barked. "And I don't want them fussing about me. Matter of fact, Santos, I'm telling you all this in confidence. And I have a favour to ask you."

His tone had altered again, and was far more serious than it had been before. A wistful note crept into his voice.

"I'd like you to take up this case," he said. "I'd like you to try and prevent this poor devil committing more insane crimes. In particular, I would like you to protect my poor wife."

For a moment Loreto wondered whether he had heard aright.

"Your wife?" he echoed. "Do you mean that your wife, too, is threatened?"

Sir George nodded gravely.

"Lilian hated poor Kitty more than anyone else. She has received pages from the diary that make terrible reading. The thing has knocked Kitty out. Her nerves have gone to bits, and she's in a nursing home now, at Cranbridge, near Oxsfoot. This murderer has made a definite threat, too. He says he will kill me first, and Kitty will die within a week of my decease. We had a typewritten note to that effect.

"As I've said, I don't care for myself, but I do for Kitty. I've got nurses watching her day and night, and detectives outside, round the nursing home. But this fellow is so cunning. I don't trust the ordinary policeman, Santos, or ordinary police methods. I wonder if you'd look after Kitty for me?"

There was something in the old man's face and voice—something very simple and pathetic—that touched Loreto, accustomed as he was to this world's sorrows.

"Very well," he said, slowly, "I'll take the thing on, Sir George, and I promise to do my best to stop this madman and put him under restraint. The thing should be comparatively easy now that we are warned in advance."

Sir George rose to his feet and held out his hand to the younger man.

"You're a good fellow, Santos," he observed. "If anyone can catch this murderer, you can, but I don't think it will be easy. In any case, thanks ever so much for taking the job on. Now I must go and say a kind word to Flora Groombridge. She'll scold me for leaving her so long."

Loreto pressed the long, thin hand gently.

"Take care of yourself," he said, earnestly. "I'll arrange, to-morrow, to have you looked after properly. In the meantime, be careful of strangers, and lock your bedroom door at night."

The old man chuckled.

"I'll ask Flora to mount guard over me," he said. "She'd drive off fifty assassins."

BACK in the drawing-room the house-party were beginning to think of bed. Loreto talked for a time to his sister, and then she bade him good night. Most of the men were taking a final whisky-and-soda before departing, but Adam Steele was playing the fool like a big schoolboy, and trying to perform some trick with a couple of chairs, despite Lady Groombridge's frigid stare. Around him stood some of the younger women, laughing loudly, and Lionel Silk was urging the Australian to further efforts.

Sir George Frame spoke for a time to his hostess, and was introduced to Otisse. The two men began to discuss Brazil, and the Frenchman offered to lend the other a book on that country.

Gradually the big room emptied as one by one the guests went up to bed. Acting upon impulse, Loreto went to Sir George Frame's bedroom. The baronet had one of the best bedrooms in the house, situated upon the first floor, and he looked rather surprised when he opened the door to Loreto.

"Hullo, Santos!" he exclaimed. "Anything you want, my boy? I was just starting to undress."

"You ought to lock your door," said Loreto, walking into the old man's room. Have you a valet with you?"

"No. I didn't bring him down. Fact is, Fletcher is a shrewd, discreet fellow, and I sent him along to Cranbridge to keep an eye on the detectives who are guarding Kitty. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*"

The old man chuckled over the tag, but Loreto was making a thorough examination of the big bedroom, and assuring himself that the windows were securely fastened, and that no one was concealed in the room.

"You must be careful, Sir George," he urged. "Remember that your life is threatened, even in this house. This room seems secure enough, but you must lock your door and bolt it."

He added the last words as he turned towards the door and saw that there were inside bolts at the top and bottom.

"All right, my boy," said the old man, good-humouredly. "I like to read for an hour before sleeping, and Otisse is to bring me along a book of his on Brazil. Directly he's gone, I'll lock, bolt, and bar. Good night, my boy. Thanks so much."

With this assurance Loreto had to be content. He went upstairs to his own room, but it was a long time before he could sleep.

IT was very improbable that Sir George would be in danger for this one night, and to-morrow Loreto would see that the absent-minded old man was properly guarded. Yet for an hour Loreto tossed sleeplessly upon his bed, thinking of anyone who could threaten or harm Sir George Frame. The French explorer was taking a book to the baronet's room, but Otisse was all right, and had been in Brazil when the "Death Diary Murders" had been committed.

Sir George's windows were secure; there was no way of entry except by the door, or smashing a window, which would raise an alarm.

And upon this thought Loreto fell at last into a troubled sleep, and awoke with the autumn sun streaming across his face.

It was after nine o'clock, and consequently rather late when Loreto descended to the breakfast-room. Most of the house-party had gone to tennis or the links, but Lady Groombridge herself was breakfasting, and with her were Otisse, Adam Steele, and Lionel Silk. There were also four women, among whom was Cleta, who waxed ironical about her brother's tardiness.

"Let him be, my dear," said Lady Groombridge, tolerantly. "He's not the last."

"I slept rather badly," explained Loreto.

"I always do," drawled Lionel Silk. "The night is such a wonderful time to dream, but one should never sleep whilst one dreams. How we waste those wonderful hours of silence and moonlight in vulgar sleep!"

Adam Steele laughed loudly.

"Silk wants a 'Moonlight Saving Bill,'" he suggested.

"The lovers would applaud that," said Otisse. "Really we should ask Sir George Frame to propose the Bill in Parliament."

"By the way," said Lady Groombridge, sharply, "Sir George is very late, and he's usually an early riser."

A parlourmaid was in the room at the moment, and the girl put in a word.

"I have just knocked at Sir George's door, m'lady," she said. "I knocked hard, but I could get no answer. I noticed that his shaving water hadn't been taken in and it was cold."

Lady Groombridge glared at the girl and then at her guests.

"That's strange," she said. "You knocked hard?"

"Did you try the door?" asked Otisse, quickly.

"No, sir," said the maid. "I just knocked."

"I don't like this," said Lady Groombridge, and a note of anxiety crept into her voice as she looked about her.

A swift feeling of apprehension swept suddenly over everyone. A woman put the general thought into words.

"Sir George was a friend of Lilian Hope. Suppose——"

The men were on their feet now, and Steele's chair overturned with a crash.

"I'll have a look," he cried, and, in his quick, impetuous fashion, he was out of the room and dashing up the broad staircase before the others. Loreto and Otisse were a yard behind the Australian; Silk, Lady Groombridge, and the other women brought up the rear.

In five seconds Steele was at the baronet's bedroom door, and was rattling the handle and calling loudly.

"Sir George!" he shouted. "Sir George!"

But there was no answer, and the Australian threw himself against the door.

"It's locked," he panted. "I can't move it."

"Knock a panel in," said Otisse, quietly. "Here, use this."

Accustomed to alarms, the little French explorer had all his wits about him. Now he snatched from the wall a Crusader's mace, which, with other weapons and armour, decorated the passage.

"That's right," boomed Lady Groombridge, "beat in the panels, Mr. Steele. Don't hesitate."

Thus encouraged, Adam Steele acted swiftly. Calling for elbow space, he swung his heavy weapon, and in three blows had one of the door panels in splinters. Through the jagged hole his arm went to the shoulder, and there was the click of a turning key.

"There's a bolt at the top and bottom, Mr. Steele," called Lady Groombridge. "Can you reach them?"

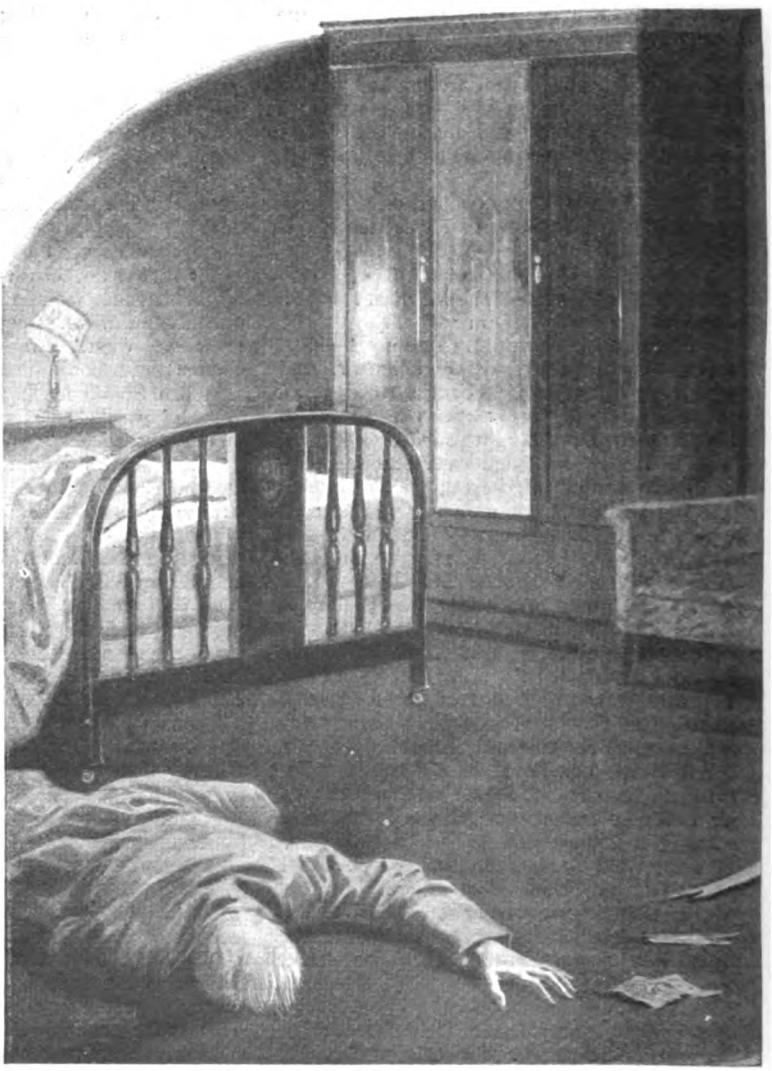
"I think so," said Steele, straining, and red in the face.

Loreto felt a hand clutch his arm, and looked round at the pale face of Cleta.

"What do you think has happened, Loreto?" asked the girl, but before he could answer there was a metallic snapping of bolts, and the door was pushed open.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Otisse, softly, and a woman suddenly screamed, for now the horrified party could see directly into the room.

And there, in the middle of the apartment, some way from his bed, lay Sir George Frame. He lay flat upon his face, one arm doubled under him, the other outstretched. One thin white hand showed upon the dark blue carpet, the fingers spread, and flattened out like a starfish.



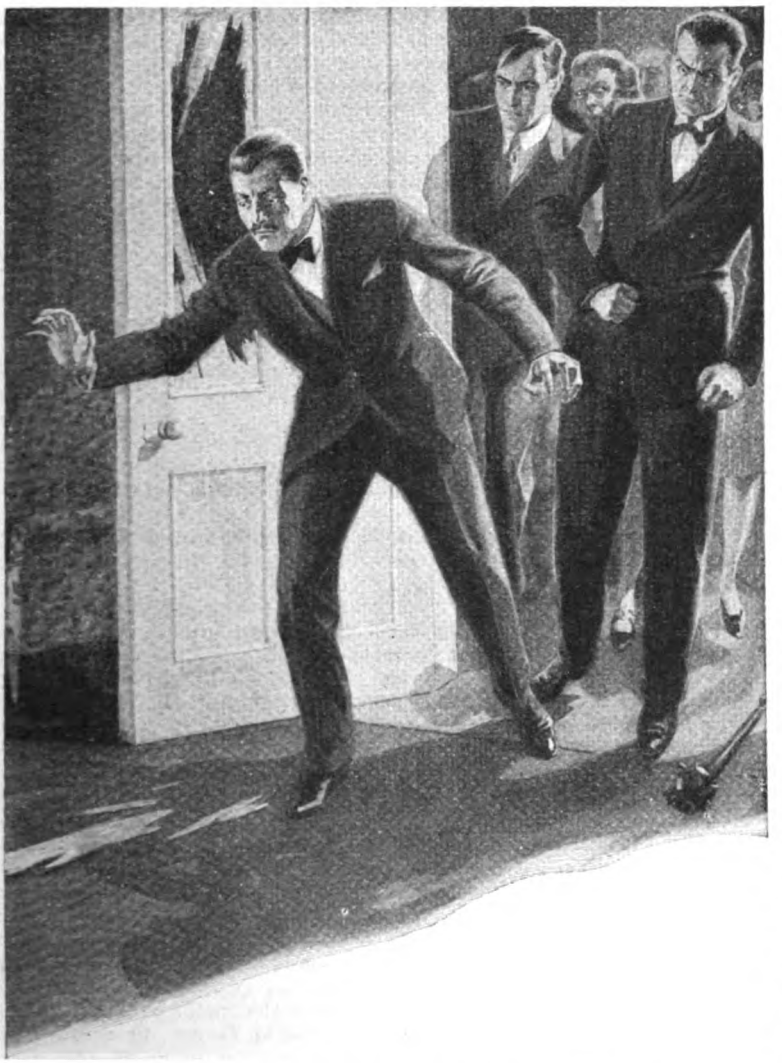
There, in the middle of the apartment, lay Sir George Frame, flat

Otisse was first beside the body, and made a quick examination.

"I'm afraid he's dead," said the explorer. "Stabbed with a knife in the back. Keep the women away."

The women, in fact, after one terrified look, withdrew slowly and returned downstairs to await further news. Lady Groombridge alone remained in the room, and she was looking about her in bewilderment.

"How was this dreadful thing done?" she asked. "The windows are bolted on the



upon his face, one arm doubled under him, the other outstretched.

inside, the chimney is impassable. Who can have done it ? "

" The ' Diary Murderer,' " said Santos, and pointed to a crumpled scrap of paper with one jagged edge that lay beside the body. Stooping, he picked up the diary page covered with its scrawling handwriting, and exclaimed aloud. On the paper was printed a date, the seventeenth of September.

" To-day's date ! " he cried. " This murderer certainly has method."

" But who can have done it, and where is he ? " wailed Lady Groombridge. " This room is practically sealed at all points."

" That's true," cried Steele. " By Jove ! The man may be hidden here now ! "

He, Otisse, Silk, and the lady began to search the apartment, looking in cupboards, behind curtains, under the bed, and in the bed itself. They began with likely hiding-places, and ended by searching fantastically.

Otisse clicked his tongue in the impatient manner of a clever man who is baffled.

" But this is extraordinary," he exclaimed. " It was humanly impossible to enter this room unless there is a secret passage."

He turned questioningly to Lady Groombridge, but she shook her head.

" This is a modern house, built by my late husband," she said. " I know the place thoroughly, and I can assure you there is no secret passage, and the walls are not thick enough for such trickiness."

" But how on earth was the murder committed, then ? " said Steele. " There is no sign of a weapon, and this poor old man has been stabbed with a knife."

Lionel Silk, meanwhile, was walking about the room, tapping the walls, while Lady Groombridge glared at him.

" I tell you, Mr. Silk, there is nothing of that sort here," she said. " If you wish, I can show you the architect's plan of the house."

Loreto, meanwhile, stared down at the dead man with thoughtful eyes. The body was clad in pyjamas and a dressing-gown, which was open as though the garment had

been put on hurriedly. A small electric reading-lamp still burned beside the bed upon an occasional table, and on the bed itself was a book on Brazil by Henri Otisse. A pair of gold-rimmed spectacles were folded in the book.

Otisse came to Loreto's side, and the Frenchman's face was pale beneath its tan.

"This is awful, Santos," he whispered. "How was the thing done?"

"He was reading your book," Loreto pointed out. "Did you take it to him last night?"

"No. I met one of the maids going to bed, and I sent the book by her." The Frenchman laughed a trifle uneasily. "You don't suspect me of murder, Santos?"

"No," said Loreto, quietly. "I only want to establish some definite facts. When, for example, was Frame last seen alive? Later I will interview that maid you sent with the book. I suppose you can remember her?"

"Certainly," said Otisse. "I'll get her now, if you like."

"No, later will do," replied Santos, and raised his voice. "Lady Groombridge," he said, "I think we had better telephone the police at once. We are not likely to discover anything by looking about in this room. It is police work, anyway. Meanwhile, leave everything exactly as it is."

"Very well, Mr. Santos," said the lady, with surprising meekness. "This is a terribly mysterious thing! Why, a mouse couldn't get into this room, let alone a man with a knife."

"Perhaps it was the ghost of Lilian Hope," said Silk, in a deep, melancholy tone. "Perhaps she still walks the earth, and avenges herself upon those who betrayed her."

"With a knife in one hand and a diary in the other," sneered Otisse. "It took more than a ghost to kill this poor man."

THEY all left the room, and Loreto shut the broken door behind him. The local police were telephoned for, and had not been in the house long before Inspector Comfort, of the Criminal Investigation Department, arrived in a car from headquarters.

The Inspector was in charge of the "Death Diary" cases, a fact that had already added one or two grey hairs to his large round head.

He greeted Loreto as an old friend, and then began to carry out the usual police examination.

Later, as he paced a deserted croquet lawn in Lady Groombridge's grounds, Loreto saw his sister coming towards him.

"Isn't this awful?" asked Cleta. "That dear old man! And how was it done? The door was locked and bolted, the windows were latched, and yet Sir George was stabbed to death. Inspector Comfort can make nothing of it."

Loreto nodded. His eyes were fixed upon a far-off pear tree, and there was an expression in them of thought and concentration that Cleta had seen before. It was a curious, detached gaze, and she had seen it in Loreto's eyes when he was playing chess, or studying a problem.

"It is a curious business altogether," he said, slowly, and then his tone changed. "Cleta, I am going to run up to London for a week," he said, more briskly. "You will be all right down here, won't you? I'm going now to make excuses to Lady Groombridge."

The girl looked at him in surprise, but she was accustomed to these sudden decisions of his.

"I'll be all right," she replied. "Have you got some clue as to who did this, Loreto?"

"Who knows?" he answered, provokingly, and was half way across the lawn before she could put a further question.

So for several days Loreto disappeared, and Cleta could only suppose that he was upon his mysterious business in London.

INSPECTOR COMFORT was completely baffled by the murder and by the evidence that confronted him. Apparently the door of the room had been locked and doubly bolted; the windows were latched securely upon the inside, and the chimney was impassable. There were no secret passages or sliding panels; and certainly no one had been concealed in the murdered man's room.

Comfort found the maid who had taken Otisse's book to Sir George Frame. This girl, scarcely seventeen years of age, was apparently the last, except the murderer, to see the baronet alive. She stated that she had taken the book along as directed. She had knocked at the door, and Sir George, in his shirt-sleeves, had opened it. He had thanked her for the book, and as she went away she heard the old man lock his bedroom door.

And yet, in the small hours of the night, someone had entered this locked and barred room and stabbed Sir George Frame to death.

The "Death Diary Murderer" had been avenged, and of his three murders this was the most mysterious. According to the doctor's evidence, Frame had been killed some hours before the discovery of his body by Lady Groombridge's guests.

The whole thing puzzled the unfortunate

Comfort more than any crime in his experience. He studied the fatal page of the diary, which contained Lilian Hope's usual denunciations, but told the Inspector nothing. There was the tragic parallel of the dates, but that conveyed little except to shed a light upon the workings of an unbalanced mind.

Nearly a week had passed, when the despairing police-inspector heard his telephone bell ring, and lifted the receiver to listen to Loreto's cheerful voice.

"That you, Comfort?" asked Loreto.

"Yes. Is that Santos?"

"His very self! I say, I think I can introduce you to the 'Death Diary Murderer.' Yes. Meet me at a quarter to eleven to-morrow morning at Oxsfoot Station. Don't be a minute late, and bring a couple of men with you. I think our friend will want a little holding."

There was a click as the wire was closed, and Inspector Comfort jumped to his feet and began to walk excitedly about his office.

Santos was an aggravating devil! He wouldn't answer questions, and he would indulge in dramatic *dénouements*, but Comfort knew that he could rely upon his eccentric friend's promise.

THE following morning, at twenty minutes to eleven, Inspector Comfort and two plain-clothed detectives arrived at Oxsfoot Railway Station. At precisely a quarter to eleven, Loreto's big Rolls glided up to the station entrance, and Loreto himself leaned forward from the driver's seat.

"Put your men in the back, Comfort," he said, "and then come and sit beside me."

A moment later, as Loreto was backing and turning his car, a labourer, on an old-fashioned bicycle, rode beside Loreto and spoke to him.

"He's on the Cranbridge road, walking towards the Home," said the "labourer," and his voice was that of an educated man. "You've plenty of time. You can catch him up in five minutes."

Loreto nodded his thanks and comprehension, and the big car glided forward along a narrow winding country lane.

"So it's a man?" said Comfort, and Loreto nodded.

"A poor unbalanced devil, Comfort," he said. "Mad, but cunning, and dangerous as a poisonous snake. The trouble is that you could meet him fifty times, and never suspect him of being mad at all. Of course, his mother was only mad on one point—the mania that she was being persecuted by her former friends."

"His mother!" exclaimed Comfort, looking at his friend's grim face. Loreto swung his car round a sharp corner and slowed down considerably.

"Yes, his mother," he said, quietly. "The man you want is the son of Lilian Hope. An illegitimate son, hidden away from her closest friends. The boy was brought up at a country farm, where his mother secretly visited him during many years. Later he went abroad to the Colonies with money furnished by Lilian Hope. He lost sight of her, and for years thought her dead. Then, when he was a man of thirty, he met in London an old landlady who had known Lilian Hope in her declining years. In this way the grown son became possessed of his mother's few poor possessions, and among them was the diary."

Loreto's voice grew stern, though there was a touch of sadness in his voice as he continued:—

"The man had always been excitable and unbalanced. He had experienced a hard life, and his early love was for his mother. You can imagine such a man reading that terrible diary, poring over every hysterical page, noting each wild denunciation. The thing drove him mad. He kept a diary, too. He wrote pages to his dead mother, and promised her, in writing, that she should be revenged."

"And he kept his word," said Inspector Comfort, softly. "Who is the man?"

The lane suddenly straightened out and the hedges disappeared. At each side there now appeared a common, covered with gorse and bramble, and short grass that ran to the edge of the straight road. In the distance a pleasant red-brick house raised its chimney-pots towards the sky, and towards this house a solitary black-clad figure was walking along the road.

"There," said Santos, with a forward jerk of his head. "That man on the road is the murderer, and the son of Lilian Hope."

An exclamation left Comfort's lips, and he knocked on the glass behind him to arouse the attention of his men. Rigid, and with tense face, the Inspector leaned forward, watching the black speck that grew constantly larger as the big car ran forward.

Now the pedestrian could be seen plainly, a vigorous, thick-set figure dressed in conventional black garb.

"Great snakes! It's a clergyman!" gasped Comfort, and Loreto smiled grimly.

"Only for this occasion," he said. "Our friend is visiting the nursing home where Lady Frame lies ill. In the next room to her the local parson is undergoing treatment. I think I see how our friend planned to get at his next victim."

As he spoke the car crept alongside the pedestrian, and Loreto raised his voice.

assistance of their chief, but even then a desperate struggle ensued before the three officers could overcome and handcuff their prisoner.

There was no doubt now about Adam Steele's madness, and his twitching face and convulsive limbs were in Loreto's mind for many a day after. Finally, however, he was securely handcuffed, and placed between the two detectives in the back of the car. Loreto backed the Rolls on to the common, and soon

An automatic was in his fingers when Inspector Comfort sprang from his seat and knocked the madman's weapon into the grass.

"Good morning, Steele," he cried, and the "clergyman" turned, to reveal the startled face of the "Australian Caruso," Adam Steele.

After that things happened with extraordinary swiftness. Steele jumped back, away from the car, and his hand went to his pocket. An automatic was in his fingers when Comfort sprang from his seat and knocked the madman's weapon into the grass. The two detectives leaped to the

she was heading towards London at forty miles an hour.

THAT night Inspector Comfort sat in Loreto's house in Regent's Park while the Spaniard explained the whole thing to his friend.

"Steele gave himself away by being too clever," said Santos. "He was cunning, and a brilliant opportunist, but he relied too much on his power to outwit others.

He threatened to kill Lady Frame within a week of her husband, and it was easy, once I suspected him, to make quite sure of my suspicions. I preferred to take him whilst on the way to his fresh victim because, as you found, Steele had a fresh page of his mother's diary upon him. If he had succeeded in killing Lady Frame, that page of the diary would have been found beside the unfortunate woman's body. Steele would have got into the nursing home under pretext of visiting the clergyman who was in the next room to Lady Frame. Once he had got into the place, Steele relied on his wits to find a way of accomplishing his purpose."

Comfort nodded.

"There was poison on him, as well as a knife. He would probably have got the old lady all right. Of course, the poor devil is quite mad, though no one seems to have noticed it. He will certainly never be hanged."

"I suspected that the man was unbalanced when I first met him," Loreto said. "Though, of course, I was far from thinking him mad. There are so many excitable, nervy people about in these days, and one can't imagine they're all homicidal lunatics. Steele was noisy and boisterous; he indulged in a fair amount of horseplay at Lady Groombridge's, but no one thought much of it. After the murder, when I came to suspect Steele, I saw the significance of all his excitability. I went to London and burgled his house at Hampstead the same night. When I found the diary—it was stuffed at the back of his bookcase, and bound in a cover of 'The Three Musketeers'—I was really not very surprised at all I read."

"How did you come to suspect Steele?" asked Inspector Comfort, and Loreto smiled.

"You know, Comfort," he said, "the easiest of all mysteries to solve are those that are considered inexplicable. I don't want to manufacture a cheap paradox, but it is a fact that if there seems no possible way in which a thing can be done, then at least there are very few ways in which it could be done, which makes a solution all the easier."

"Or all the more difficult," growled Comfort. "How did Steele get into a room when the door was locked and bolted and the windows were——"

"He didn't," said Loreto. "He went to the door and knocked on it. When poor old careless Frame opened, Steele went in on some pretext and stabbed his victim in the back."

"But the door was found locked and bolted!"

"By Steele himself," said Loreto. "It was clever. The man was a brilliant opportunist, as I have said. He was first up the stairs, and first at the door. He called out to his dead victim: he rattled the door handle; he held the handle while he flung himself against the door. It was all easy, but very effective. Finally he knocked a hole in the panel and tooled with the key and bolts. I thought somehow the snap of the bolts didn't sound quite right, but we were all excited, and Cleta was talking to me."

"Snakes alive!" exclaimed Comfort. "He was clever. No wonder I was taken in by the evidence."

"He was too clever," observed Santos. "He made things too inexplicable. I think it was Whitman who advised the young to learn all they could, but 'to reject anything that insulted their intelligence.' That locked door insulted my intelligence. I had to reject that as an acceptable fact. The windows were really barred; there was really no one concealed in the room; there were actually no sliding panels. All these things I could prove for myself, but the one thing I had to take on trust was that locked and bolted door. I had to accept Steele's word for an impossibility. I rejected Steele's word, and began to suspect him. He was too clever, and, thank God, there will be no more 'Death Diary Murders.'"

"It was a good piece of deduction," said the Inspector, judicially. "A very pretty piece of deduction."

Loreto shook his head moodily.

"I wish I had been in time to save that poor old man," he said.

(Next month in this series will appear "The Indiscreet Wife.")

NEXT MONTH:

"FAIRY KIST"

Rudyard Kipling's First Detective Story

FACING THE MICROPHONE

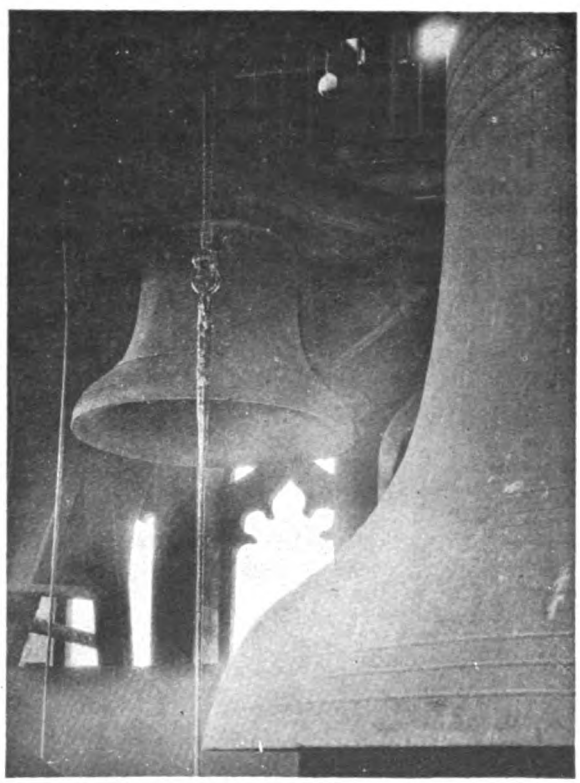
Some Celebrities "Mike" has met—and strange places he has visited

By ARTHUR LAWRENCE

"MIKE" is the presiding deity at Savoy Hill. It is not a high-sounding word, and I should have rejected it (in favour of microphone) had I not seen it canonized in the archives of the B.B.C. I have heard the expression, "for the love of Mike!" but the Mike of the studio is so cold and critical that nobody loves him. But Mike cares for none of these things as long as he can be here, there, and in all places where something happens.

It cannot be gainsaid that Mike is a severe and, indeed, ruthless god. Your enunciation, intonation, or vocal production is never flattered by him. On the contrary, he searches out any weakness that his devotee may possess, and then coldly transmits it to the world at large. Your hopes and fears are nothing to him.

Mike is a permanent occupant of the great belfry which houses Big Ben, and a section of the broadcasting priestcraft have to attend to him now and again, for the Cockney sparrows, who have been known to take the feathers from the eagle's breast, make a point of attacking his clothing in order to remove the cotton-wool in which he is embedded, so that with it they can more completely furnish their nests.



Mike is a permanent occupant of the great belfry which houses Big Ben.

The microphone is the round white object at the top of the photograph.

MIKE GOES EVERYWHERE.

AT Canterbury Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, on the racecourse—horses and hounds, on the river, beneath the river, within the aquarium at the Zoo, at cricket and football matches, in aeroplanes, at City banquets and other places where Royalty and Mr. Churchill make themselves heard, Mike is there!—hearing everything; icily perfect, immutably just. The microphone is all-hearing.

According to the B.B.C. records, this is the first illustrated magazine article on the inner working of British Broadcasting, and many of the photographs reproduced here are published for the first time. The photograph of the Wireless Choir, for instance, was taken at my request, as the hundreds of thousands who, like myself, regard the studio service and the exquisite Epilogue as one of the great events of the week, will be interested in this exceptional vocal octet, and not least, perhaps, in the little lady, third from the left, whose pure tones have often been accredited to a youth of the opposite sex. It was not until I had become an audience of one (in the studio) at the Epilogue that I realized that the boy with the remarkable voice does not exist.

The Wireless Choir.

MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE MICROPHONE.

THE first thing that strikes you about Savoy Hill is the peculiarly cheerful aspect of everyone in the place. They all look upon you with a cheery smile, as if they had met you before and are actually delighted to meet you again. You are first ushered into one of the reception-rooms, where the furniture and mural decorations seem especially designed to soothe the nerves of those who may regard broadcasting as an ordeal, and then taken up in the lift to Number — studio. Your predecessor has not yet come to the end of his " little piece," so you slip into a small annexe and, through a glass window, watch him addressing the microphone as if he were Pygmalion about to embrace the inanimate form of the statue. Sir Harry Lauder, for instance, who was such a success " on the wireless," made no bones about this. The many records he had made for the gramophone had not gone for nothing, and the moment he saw the microphone he knew what was needed. In fact, when he threw off his coat and disclosed himself in a sweater, the startled Announcer realized that the great artiste had come fully prepared for the event. It is only by addressing the microphone as an old friend, in spirit and in truth, that the vast concourse of listeners will receive a pleasant impression of your own personality.

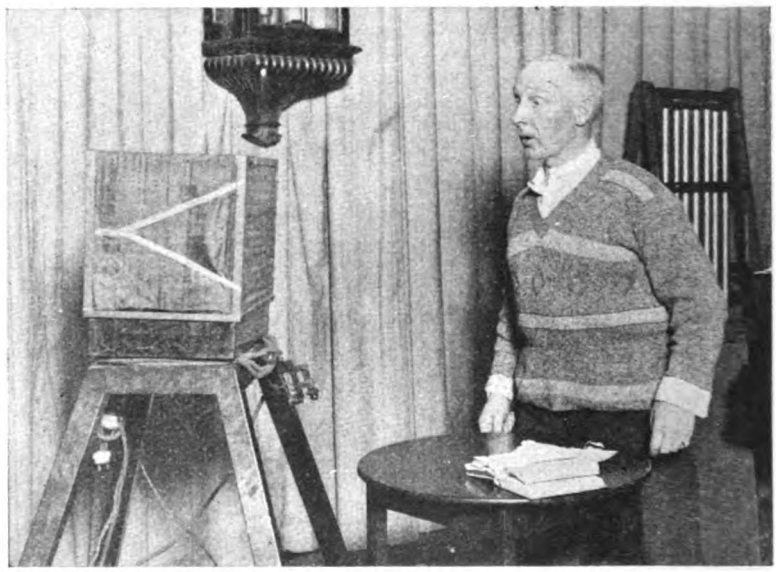
In the studio after the previous victim has left it you regard the " Mike " and the Announcer with bated breath, but he relieves your suspense with the smiling assurance that for the moment the studio is not " on." When it is " on," he tells us, a little disc will show a red light, and then it behoves you not to rustle your script, nor is there any particular call to broadcast a sneeze or a cough. I was even allowed to discover that a sneeze can be nipped in the bud, as it were, by pressing a finger upon the upper lip just under the nose.

The red light is up, the Announcer goes to the microphone, and speaking cheerfully, as if to assure listeners that they are in for a good thing, he mentions your name and the subject, and then he repeats your name ceremonially by way of introducing you to the million. You are now sitting at a table close to the microphone, and having realized what is required, you talk in your very own natural way to the " Mike," as if it were a personal friend who just loves the very tones of your voice. At any rate, that is the mental attitude which you ought to assume.

MISS MARGARET BANNERMAN.

NOW for those who have been through the ordeal. In the course of my interview with Miss Margaret Bannerman, who hails from Canada and, at the time of writing, is playing the "lead" in "The Golden Calf" at the Globe, this charming lady informed me that: "So far from feeling all alone with the microphone, I feel the uplift of the spirit of a great concourse of listeners, interested, inspiring and helpful.

"No, I don't find that a number of visitors in the studio are helpful. Quite the reverse. Of course, they may laugh or applaud at the right moment, and that should brighten things up for you and the listener, but suppose they don't! They tend to make one self-conscious. In the studio you cannot create the conditions of the theatre, where, on the stage, you have your audience in front of you, and not behind or around you. It is quite different. I have only broadcasted on two occasions: once from my dressing-room on Canada Day and the other time at Savoy Hill, when I acted as the announcer of a programme which I had arranged."



Sir Harry Lauder takes off his coat to "Mike."

Photo: Barratt's Photopress Ltd.

Miss Margaret Bannerman.

"I feel the uplift of the spirit of a great concourse of listeners."

MR. MATHESON LANG.

MR. MATHESON LANG, the ever-popular actor-manager, spoke jubilantly of the atmosphere which prevails at 2LO.

"My one and only experience of broadcasting there was when we did 'The Wandering Jew.' It was altogether a most delightful and interesting experience. The officials, one and all, at the B.B.C. treated us with the utmost courtesy and consideration, and

gave us every possible help—especially the producer who arranged and conducted the rehearsals of 'The Wandering Jew.' It was an experience that I and my company all thoroughly enjoyed, and which we hope to repeat at some future time. The atmosphere at Savoy Hill is a charming one of a lot of artistic companions working cheerily together, and the work could not be carried out under more pleasant conditions.

"I agree with you that broadcasting is a tremendous effort to the actor who is used to a personal and partly visible audience, just as film-acting in front of a camera is horribly cold-blooded and difficult, compared with acting in the theatre. But after I had got used to the quaintness of speaking in the middle of a big room into a little square box, I began to feel just what you say Margaret Bannerman described she felt—a sort of psychic sense of the thousands of people listening at the other end of that little square box, as it were, and there was no feeling at all that one was speaking into nothing. On the contrary, one seemed to be speaking directly to all those thousands and thousands of people.

"It was a tremendously uplifting and thrilling experience."

Mr. Seymour Hicks.

"I am not at all nervous of the microphone."

Photo: Barratt's Photopress Ltd.

MR. SEYMOUR HICKS.

MR. SEYMOUR HICKS has had such a long and successful career as an actor that one is almost surprised to find that he is not more than fifty-six, but to converse with him is to be conscious of so much "pep" and "go" that one can hardly persuade oneself that he has attained to that age. It seems safe to prophesy that in thirty years' time he will still be "quite a lad."

Beaming with smiles, he took my breath away at the start, for I realized that, alone among those I have interviewed, he had—as he thought—some cause for complaint.

"As to the 'Mike,'" he exclaimed, "I cannot say that I was at all nervous of the instrument itself, but what did make me nervous was the knowledge that behind me sat a party of expert announcers who, I felt sure, were thinking that I was as bad at broadcasting as perhaps I am on the stage. I was telling some stories on the wireless in one of the big provincial cities, and six young gentlemen sat round and never moved a muscle, and when I had finished they all got up in silence, except one, and he said to me, 'I liked that last story of yours,' whereupon I nearly 'took the count,' for I had been speaking for a quarter of an hour."

One could only tell Mr. Hicks that his ears could not have stood the combined cacophony of the millions who did laugh.

SIR GERALD DU MAURIER.

SIR GERALD DU MAURIER in his reply is delightfully human. "Broadcasting," he tells me, "gives one a feeling rather like standing on the doorstep of the dentist's before ringing the bell—a slight form of nerves, I expect—and then I felt like a child saying his little piece, and one had not quite the same confidence that one has when singing in the bathroom. At the same time, I was convinced that no one was listening, and that the whole thing was an elaborate and stupid joke."

SIR OLIVER LODGE.

OF all the broadcast talkers, the most popular is Sir Oliver Lodge, quite apart from the fact that he has had so much to do with the perfecting of the means by which we make use of the infinite

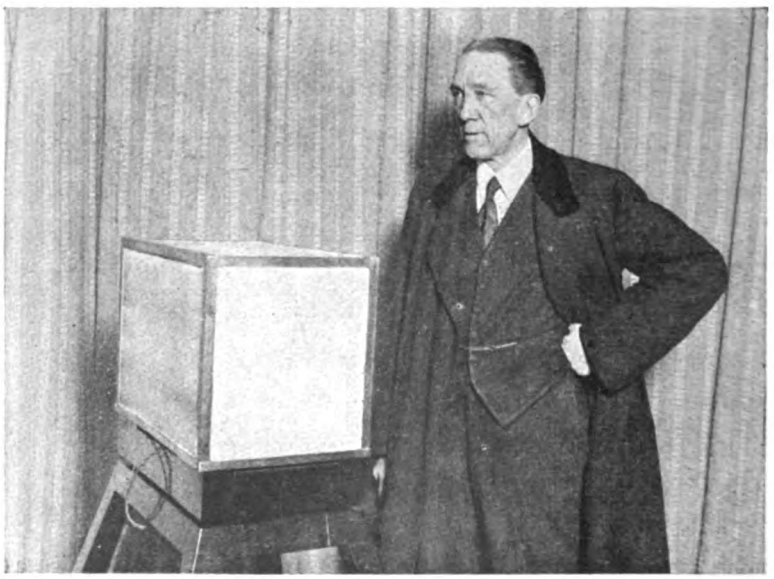
ether. Many people who listen to no other talks never fail to hear his. Few listeners will ever forget his talks on the pioneers of astronomy and his previous chats on the infinitely little, of the proton and electron, which, as compared with the atom, which they support, are as a dew moth "occupying" St. Paul's Cathedral, or of his solemn reference at the end of his talks to the "unsearchable Mind, who is at home in Infinity." It is, therefore, with particular pleasure that one is able to publish a letter from him.

"I do not remember," he writes, "having had any particular feelings about the microphone, beyond appreciation of the excellent organization that had made such extensive broadcasting possible.

"Whether an audience is visible or invisible makes little difference to the imagination; except that one cannot receive back any helpful stimulus. Nevertheless, a twenty-minutes' talk under microphone conditions sometimes seems to err on the side of shortness."

accompany some songs of his own composition, "Songs for My Little Ones."

In that clear handwriting of his, which may well bring a blush to those who try to achieve distinction by being undecipherable, he replies: "I think my impressions when broadcasting are much the same as those of most people. There is certainly an 'uncanniness' about the whole thing. The complete silence, the absence of any visible audience, and the impossibility of judging what effect one is producing are apt to be



Sir Gerald du Maurier.
"I felt like a child saying his little piece."
Photo: Barratt's Photopress Ltd.

SIR HENRY J. WOOD.

SIR HENRY J. WOOD, one of the most popular of our conductors, more particularly in regard to his long association with the Queen's Hall popular concerts, writes me from Chorley Wood: "Yes, I consider that the microphone has had, and is having, a most beneficial effect upon all orchestral performances; after all, it is only natural that musicians should put up a better all-round performance when they realize that perhaps a million or more people are 'listening-in.'"

SIR FREDERIC COWEN.

IT was quite an occasion when, in October last, our veteran composer and conductor, Sir Frederic Cowen, who is now seventy-five, reappeared at 2LO, after a silence of some years, to somewhat depressing and discouraging at first, but this feeling wears off very soon, and when one really begins to realize that one is being listened to by such a vast audience, one is stimulated to give of one's best, just as one would in the concert-room or the theatre."

SIR HAMILTON HARTY.

SIR HAMILTON HARTY could be described as the (musical) Wizard of the North, as in 1920 he was appointed permanent conductor of the Hallé Orchestra, which, with Manchester as its headquarters, continues to give, for six months in the year, orchestral concerts in the North of England, Scotland, and Ireland. This good work has been going on since the inception of the orchestra under Sir Charles (then Mr.) Hallé just seventy years ago. Writing from Manchester, Sir Hamilton

Harty declares that "I fear I shall be a disappointment to you, for, though I have broadcast many times, I have never remembered, once the music began, that there was a microphone anywhere near, and that millions of listeners were probably cursing me for taking up time—which might have been devoted to something really amusing—with a Brahms Symphony or something else of the same type. (But, all the same, I am convinced that there is a steadily growing number of listeners who do not curse on such occasions.)

"Perhaps it is because a conductor generally has his back to the microphone that he forgets about it; perhaps the problem of giving the best performance of which he is capable leaves him little room for concern as to what other people are thinking of it.

"The only things that have struck me about broadcasting are the politeness and courtesy of the officials connected with it, and the fact that it is doing a great work in making the millions familiar with good music."

SIR LANDON RONALD.

IT is only to be expected that when eminent folk, who have never made a business of speaking, are invited to address a vast but invisible audience, such a task may be an ordeal, and it is quite certain that some will be more successful than others; but, so far as music is concerned, the orchestra, and even the vocalists, are merely continuing to do what it has been their particular business to do, and if they are well led and fully trained one may almost assume that they would carry on with as much precision if they were being listened to by the whole universe as they would in face of a small audience.

In his reply to a question, that brilliant composer and skilled conductor, and Principal of the Guildhall School of Music, Sir Landon Ronald, rubs this in with some emphasis. He writes as follows:—

"The fact of conducting in the studio of the B.B.C. never has had any effect upon me whatsoever. I never think of the audience, but only of the music, and I may say that this applies to concert work as well as studio work. One certainly misses the applause at the end, but I got used to this through having made gramophone records for thirty years."

SIR OWEN SEAMAN.

SIR OWEN SEAMAN, the Editor of *Punch*, has put his impressions of "Facing the Microphone" in verse and has sent me the clipping from *Punch* so that our readers may be able to appreciate his emotions:—

BROADCASTING AND THE PERSONAL NOTE.

(To M. H. B.)

Last night I "talked" from 2LO;
"The Radio Times" had spread a rumour
That I would be prepared to throw
Into the void of ether's flow
Some thoughts I had regarding "Humour."
Too gay a topic; so I read
Some samples of my own conceits instead.

And, as I read, my fancy flew
To where you live next door to Boreas,
Far in the Highlands; there I knew
That, though in Scotland's general view
I might be deemed a dull and sorry ass,
You would be kind; I had no doubt
Your loyal heart would bravely stick it out.

So, when at last I hushed my drones,
And, freshened by its nap, the nation
Sat up to readjust its phones
Ready for Strauss's livelier tones,
I had the following inspiration:—
I felt it might be rather jolly
To let you have this message—"Good night, Molly!"

But did I dare to? I did not.
Too much I feared the stern officials.
That man is broken on the spot
Who adds the smallest word to what
Stands in the text with their initials
To fix a final sanction. Golly!
If I had done a gag like "Good night, Molly!"

Think what my present state would be
If I had dared that dashing curtain!
The minions of the B.B.C.
Would instantly have gone for me;
I should have been—of this I'm certain—
Haled to a dungeon by the ear,
Thrown into chains and shot at dawn, my dear.

Owing to my restraint, this hand
Is still alive to write and bless you
For listening-in so nicely, and
I hope I've made you understand
Why I could not just then address you,
Why I declined that tempting folly.
But I am safe with "Punch." So Good night, Molly!

O. S.

MESSRS. CLAPHAM AND DWYER.

IN the course of the development of broadcasting at Savoy Hill, it was soon discovered that many of the comedians who had made a great success on the stage scarcely raised a laugh through the microphone. The invisibility of the comedian and his comparative failure served to show how much of his success on the stage was due to

his make-up, his garb, his facial play, and the movements of his whole body. Incidentally, we still know how much is lost for this reason in the broadcasting of plays. But two men, who justly describe themselves as "The Wireless Entertainers," have developed a technique which enables them to "bring it off" on the wireless and score hits all the time. They are Messrs. Clapham and Dwyer. Their ground plan is simple. One of them starts off magniloquently to give the invisible audience an instructional discourse and the other persistently interrupts. The interruptions are pertinent to begin with, but quickly tail off into the most amazing irrelevancies, which keep one in a broad grin all the time.

Mr. "Billie Dwyer," who, with his colleague, has been responsible perhaps for more laughter on the wireless than all the rest put together, is good enough to tell us something about it:—

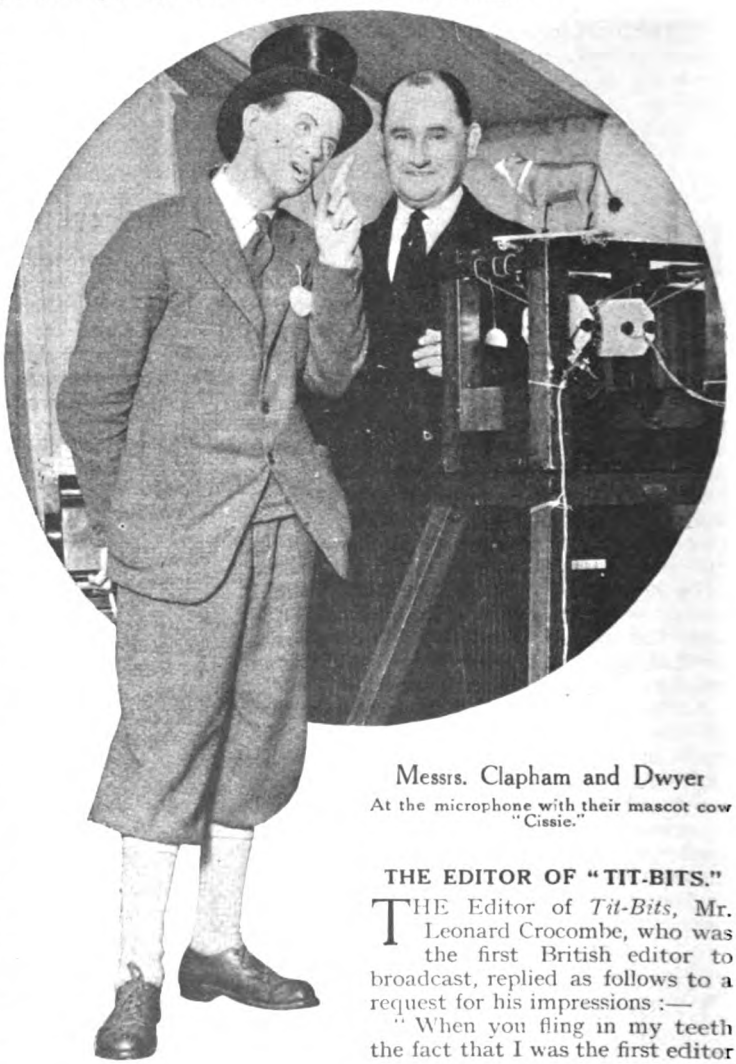
"Now that we have had a fair experience of broadcasting we find that facing our friend Mike is very little different from facing an audience, but our first introduction to Mike was quite a different matter.

"It was very early one morning, when I was washing up the supper dishes, whilst Clapham was singing joyous songs in the bathroom, that there came a voice over the 'phone to inform us that we were due for an audition at Savoy Hill. This was good news, and we went forth to view the battlefield in the best of spirits.

"On our arrival we became rather subdued, for we were told to take a seat in a corridor outside the fatal room. We looked at one another and stopped our whistling when we saw a red light burning over the door. On every side we saw pieces of pasteboard in prominent places with the word SILENCE in very loud letters. We 'hushed-up' accordingly and felt that any fun we possessed was oozing away.

"The door opened suddenly, and a grave-looking person said: 'Come this way, please.' Clapham gave me a nudge. I knew what he felt, so I spoke for both: 'It doesn't ache now, so would you mind if we put it off till to-morrow?' But the man looked more severe than before—and there was no escape. Inside the operating theatre sat several more sad-looking men, all wearing headphones, and who looked at us with challenging glares which meant, 'Go on now and make us laugh!'

"Ten minutes later two dishevelled figures, perspiring freely, staggered weakly from the torture chamber—sloppy but happy. *We had made them laugh!*"



Messrs. Clapham and Dwyer
At the microphone with their mascot cow "Cissie."

THE EDITOR OF "TIT-BITS."

THE Editor of *Tit-Bits*, Mr. Leonard Crocombe, who was the first British editor to broadcast, replied as follows to a request for his impressions:—

"When you fling in my teeth the fact that I was the first editor

Miss Beatrice Harrison

With her 'cello in the Surrey garden where she coaxed the nightingales to sing.

to broadcast a talk from a British station, I plead guilty. The only explanation I can think of is the one made by a young reveller who, upon waking up in hospital, was asked why he had jumped through a plate-glass window the night before : ' Well, it seemed a very good idea at the time.'

" You suggest I should revive my impressions of broadcasting in those early, rough-and-ready, pioneer days, when men *were* men at the top of Marconi House ; those days before handsome, golden-haired announcers, in boiled shirts ; before Mike grew mahogany legs ; before studios outrivalled the lounge at Claridge's.

" Well, well ! 'Twas on the dank wet evening of March 14th, 1923, that I had the first of my many experiences of broadcasting. I walked boldly into Marconi House, was jerked up to a top floor in the lift, and promptly lost myself in a maze of winding, narrow corridors. At last I was rescued and shown into a stuffy little room—the studio !

" I have never felt so lonely in my life as when, having been announced, I stood in front of the microphone. The Mike of those days looked a fearsome, rather brutal jumble of unsympathetic machinery. It stood, if I remember aright, on a couple of soap boxes. I stood on the toes of the second violinist—or almost.

" And I thought of the ' vast, unseen audience ' I had so often heard about, and I went hot. I shivered at the deathly silence at the end of my first funny story, and I went icy cold. I visualized my managing-director sneering at my struggles—and I went hot and cold all over !

" Still, I lived to tell the tale, and was even invited by Arthur R. Burrows, then Director of Programmes, to broadcast regularly once a month. This I did from all the B.B.C. stations which then existed—eight, I think.

" In those wild and woolly days we hardy pioneers had, if we were to broadcast from, say, Manchester and Glasgow, actually to *go* to Manchester and Glasgow. I went to both places. That will show you the risks we had to take.

" Nowadays, of course, you can stay cosily in a velvet-lined studio at Savoy Hill, with a bunch of hot-house blooms at your elbow and a nice, ' refained ' little announcer all complete with smelling salts and things. It is much safer."

MIKE PAYS SOME VISITS.

MANY of the so-called B.B.C. " stunts " stand high in our esteem, and I, for one, shall never forget the effect on my mind of the Oxted woods at midnight, with the rushing wind in the trees as the background to the song of the nightingales, after being coaxed by the strains of the 'cello played by that keen lover of birds, Miss Beatrice Harrison.

At another time lions at Olympia were induced to roar for the microphone to please the thousands of children who listen.

Even the conger-eels at the Zoo were induced to bark, though I am told that they had to be prevented from eating the microphone.

The photograph of a diver with all the human supporters that a diver requires was taken on the occasion of a wireless novelty which was broadcast in 1926, when Mr. F. Shield, of Whitstable, made a descent in the Thames, from the steps of the County Hall, Westminster. Mr. Shield first broadcasted a talk, in which he described sea-diving, and afterwards, clad in full diving rig, he explored the bed of the Thames, describing his experiences as he moved from point to point under the water. He carried in his diver's helmet a small microphone, which was connected by line—attached to the head-dress—to amplifying apparatus on the steps of the County Hall. Thence a line ran to the B.B.C. at Savoy Hill, where the diver's comments were further amplified and sent over another line to the transmitter at the Oxford Street station.

In the photograph the diver is seen ready to descend. The striking effect produced by his instructions to "start the pump, please," and also the sound of the sirens of passing river craft, will be readily recalled.

"Very few people," the bright-eyed official who has had most to do with these outside adventures told me, "have any idea of the amount of labour, the meticulous care in rehearsing, the necessity for timing everything to a fraction of a second, which some of these matters involve.

"For instance, in covering the consecration of Liverpool Cathedral for a broadcast which lasted for about an hour, there were five microphones in use, and three of them were hung from a height of ninety feet in the air. Every part of the organ must have its own microphone. We had to negotiate everything with the utmost care throughout the service and hit the precise moment when one set of microphones must be faded in and another set faded out.

"In reporting the boat-race not only had we to build a special transmitter, but had to arrange a series of listening posts along the river, which were connected by telephones to London."

The Diver

About to descend into the Thames in order to broadcast through a microphone in his helmet an account of his experiences under the water.

HE LIKES MEN OF CHARACTER.

MY informant added that not all those who talked or acted to the microphone were imperturbable. "Many artistes suffer from nerves. This is due to the absence of response. The fact that the comedian can make no appeal to the eye has made it extraordinarily difficult to secure comedians who can 'bring it off' at the microphone. Clapham and Dwyer, for example, are brilliant exceptions. There are very few people who can stand up at the Mike and raise a laugh, being without the support of facial efforts and peculiar attire. For those who largely depend on the support of a visible audience, it is a trying ordeal. The accomplished speaker, and also a bold seaman or any other man of character, who has something to say, are much more at home. They seldom fail."

KOKO THE THINGUMABOB

By

Anthony Armstrong

("A. A." of *Punch*.)

Illustrated by
L. G. ILLINGWORTH

ONCE upon a time a dusty messenger was shown into the Council Hall of the King of Sparmania. He carried with him a small wooden box which he handed to the King together with a letter. Then he looked round to see if there was any chance of a drink.

There wasn't. Everyone was far too busy trying to edge near enough to see what the box contained, and yet not near enough to get hurt in case it was anything dangerous. In those days one never knew; people—particularly fairies—had queer ideas as to what exactly constituted a good practical joke.

The King, after very nervously peeping into the box, remarked quickly that he couldn't see without his spectacles, and handed it to the Court Chamberlain. The Court Chamberlain instantly said it was a very peculiar thing, but he too had left his glasses behind, and popped the box into the Vizier's arms. The Vizier was just pretending to fumble in his pocket when the King, the box being now at a safe distance, told him very sharply that his unaided eyesight was perfectly adequate. Thereupon the Vizier, with a resigned expression, opened the box.

In it upon a nest of straw was an extraordinary little creature. It had the head of a cock with extremely bright, beady eyes, embryo wings, and a long tail with little hackles on it. It possessed sharp claws; and occasional feathers grew in unexpected places. On seeing the light, it opened its beak and gave vent to a feeble chirping. Whatever it was, it was quite young.

"Bless my soul!" said the King, who had now conveniently found his spectacles. "What is it?"

"I don't know!" replied the Chamberlain, equally puzzled

"Well, I don't believe it's true," pronounced the King, emphatically, after a prolonged scrutiny. "There's *no* such thing!"

"It's quite true!" interposed the Vizier, advancing a finger and withdrawing it a little too late, as the animal made a nasty peck.

The Chamberlain had begun a remark about things off cheeses; but the King had by then remembered the accompanying letter and was reading it out loud:—

"*From H.I.M. the Emperor of Granada to H.M. the King of Sparmania.*

"*Dear Old Boy,*

"*Am sending herewith a little thing we hatched out unexpectedly the other day in our Farm Yard. Something got among the hens and killed them all, and the only thing we had handy to hatch out what eggs had not been trodden on was a serpent. Only one came out, and, as you will see, the result is rather peculiar. The Empress thinks the egg must have been bad, but I say there's magic in it somewhere. Anyway, I'm sending it to you because you're fond of animals.*

"*Yours,*

"GRANADA.

"*P.S. His pet name is Koko, we think.*

"*P.P.S.* I HOPE YOU WILL KEEP HIM SAFELY."

"H'm!" said the King thoughtfully to himself, while the Court was crowding round the novelty. He had a very worried look. For the Emperor of Granada was a powerful rival of his, and indeed was only looking for excuses to invade his kingdom. In those days they were a little more punctilious about the opening stages of a war than we are now, but so far Sparmania had steered a safe and tactful course in the face of all provocations.

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"I wonder what Granada is up to now?" mused the King, taking a closer look at the gift.

"Isn't he a *darling?*" cried an enthusiastic Lady-in-Waiting. "Koko! Koko! Oh, the little diddums!"

"Shut up!" said the King, testily. "I'm thinking."

The young lady shut up. Privately she considered the King rather a rude man, even for a King.

"I don't like that postscript," at last said the Vizier to his master.

"Eh? Why not? Koko seems all right as a name."

"No, I meant the other postscript. Here! You!" he added to the messenger, who was still looking as thirsty as he could. "Was there any verbal message?"

"Only this, sire: That His Imperial Majesty has given you a present, and that he will consider it a serious matter, and one for *personal* investigation, should you lose it or destroy it."

"Oh!" said the King, apprehensively. "Well, that'll do, thank you."

The messenger bowed. "Would there be anything else?" he inquired, tactfully. He hoped the answer would be a stoup of wine.

"Not for you," snapped the King, who was an outspoken man.

The messenger went. "Well, I *hope* it dies," he added, vindictively. But not till he was well outside the door. The King of Sparmania had a reputation for enterprising forms of punishment.

THAT evening the King, with the Vizier and the Court Chamberlain, held a solemn inspection of Koko. They had never seen anything like him before. He had such a malevolent stare in his beady eyes as made the recipient of it feel rather strange about the middle of the chest.

"I suppose there's a catch somewhere," said the King at last, "but it looks fairly harmless at the moment. Compared, of course, to what he might have sent," he added hastily, as the animal flapped its unformed wings and pecked viciously.

"Well, if we don't want war with Granada, we'll have to keep it."

"I wish we had a Magician to tell us what this thingumabob really is," complained the King. "It's just our luck his not being here."

The Court had been without a Magician for some days now. They had had one, but he had vanished suddenly during some experiments; and to avoid friction a successor had not yet been appointed, in case he got over his slight disappearance—for they were by no means always fatal.

"However," continued the King, briskly, "we'll have to do without him. Send Ali to me!"

Ali was the Keeper of the Royal stables. His job was no sinecure, for in those days horses were about the least exciting thing that inhabited stables. Dragons, snakes, seven-legged wolves, practically anything that came along, were parked in the Royal Stables under Ali's charge; and there was no lack of supply. One only needed a malicious witch or an inventive-minded Magician with a passion for creating new animal types, such as Jellyhocks and so on, to keep the place fairly full at all seasons.

"Oh, Ali," said the King, airily, when the Keeper of the Royal Stables entered, chewing a straw—for he was a privileged person, and anyway it was Royal straw. "Just take charge of this, will you?"

"Any name?" queried Ali, who was too experienced to ask what it was. It might be anything from the latest fashion in Court fauna to one of the Ladies-in-Waiting who had had words with a fairy.

"Well, not as yet," replied the King. "Its *pet* name, though, is Koko!"

"Don't look much of a pet to me! He's going to *grow*, that's what he's going to do! Grow!"

"You must look after it very carefully. Nothing must happen to it. It's a matter of—of——"

"Life and death?" suggested the Vizier.

"Peace and war?" added the Chamberlain.

"Both!" said the King, candidly. "The former for you, Ali. So you'd better be careful! In fact, I've just thought of a new death. In my bath this morning. Not, of course, that you'll let anything happen to Koko, Ali, will you?" he finished, smiling a pleasant, open smile.

"You bet I won't," said Ali, with some feeling. He picked up Koko with the practised grasp of the true animal lover who has been bitten before, and departed.

Time went on, and beyond an occasional inquiry the King began to forget the Thingumabob, as the little stranger had now been officially named. Ali had reported that the animal was being fed on coal, for which he had shown a marked partiality, and that he looked very healthy and, as he himself had prophesied, was growing. Now and then the Vizier sent off a tactful letter with a bunch of flowers and a few diamonds to the Emperor of Granada to say how well Koko was looking and what fun it was having him about the place, and everyone felt a difficult situation was being adroitly handled.

Then after some months the King one day paid an official visit of inspection.

Koko the Thingumabob had certainly grown. In fact, he was nearly as high as a man. His wings were large and leathery, and a sheeny iridescence was beginning to show on his scaly feathers. His beak had a razor edge and the hackles of his tail were spiked. But his eyes were the most impressive thing about him. They had a penetrating and freezing quality which almost seemed to dry up the blood in the veins of those he looked at. The King gave one quick glance and turned away.

"Makes me quite ill," he said. "I suppose we've got to keep him, or Granada will be—— Ali! What's wrong with that man?" He fretfully. "I wish we had our Magician back, and could find out what the animal really was."

At this moment Koko suddenly opened his beak and yawned. A hot breath as of fire reached out towards them.

"Any name?" queried Ali.
"Well, not as yet," replied the King. "Its *pet* name, though, is Koko."

pointed to a groom who was crossing the yard in a lethargic manner and with slow, dragging steps.

Ali looked worried. He seemed a bit lethargic himself. "That's one of the fellows that helps feed the Thingumabob, your Majesty," he replied. "As a matter of fact, we're all getting a bit like that. It's the way that Thingumabob *looks* at you, *I* think!"

The King peered at Koko and looked away again.

"I knew there'd be a catch," he said.

"Great Talismans!" ejaculated the King, drawing back. "He's got a touch of the dragon in him."

"He ain't true-bred by *no* means," agreed Ali. "I'd like to see *his* pedigree, I would."

"He's very nearly breathing fire," continued the King, still keeping his face averted.

"Worst case of halitosis I've ever seen," remarked the Chamberlain, judicially.

"It's from eating all that coal," supplemented Ali. "And he's *growing*."

The King left the stables thoughtfully. He considered the Emperor of Granada was no gentleman.

NEXT week there was consternation in the Palace. One morning Ali came running in to the Royal Presence in a great state of mind.

"Your Majesty!" he gasped.

"What is it? Is the Thingumabob dead?" demanded the King, sharply. "In that case, you know what I said. You'll be for my latest invention. It's a kind of——"

"No, no. He's all right. But he's suddenly taken to breathing real fire——"

"Well, I'm not the Fire Brigade!" snapped the King. "It's no good telling *me*."

"Worse still," continued Ali; "I daren't let him look at me."

"Why not?"

"Two of the grooms *have*."

"Well, what about it?"

"Come and see, your Majesty!"

When they arrived, a faint cloud of smoke hung over Koko's den at the far end of the yard, the result, Ali explained, of his breathing. And just outside the cage someone had apparently erected a new stone statue, a most life-like group of two grooms holding a bucket of coal between them.

"I—I don't understand," said the King. "Have you taken to sculpture? It's very good."

"No—no," stammered Ali. "It's—it's the Thingumabob. *Those* are the two grooms who feed him. They've been getting slower and slower, and this morning that Koko suddenly looked straight at them and they *turned into stone*."

"Merciful Amulets!" gasped the King; and then they caught a glimpse of a beak showing in the smoke cloud.

They were outside the place in record time. Ali didn't have to bother about Royalty taking precedence; the King had him beat by yards.

"I simply can't understand it," the King said to the Vizier that night for the twentieth time. "What *is* this Thingumabob?"

"The Court Chamberlain is still looking it up in the Library of Magic, your Majesty. But it doesn't matter very much what it *is*. We can see that for ourselves."

"Oh, can we?" said the King. "Not without catching a bad spell or something. And, anyway, the books may tell us how to kill it."

"But we can't *kill* it."

"Why not?"

"Because of Granada. As long as we keep the thing and tell him it's here, he won't make war."

"True! I'd forgotten. But we might put a charm on it to make it harmless. I mean, something must be done. I can't have the Fire Brigade standing by all day and my grooms slowly changing into a sculpture gallery. By the way, where are those two? Perhaps I should say, where is the statue?"

The Vizier coughed discreetly.

"I've disposed of it," he said at last with some confusion.

"Where is it?" repeated the King, pointedly.

"Well—I—er—I have a nice lawn at home which just wanted something in the centre to set it off; a sundial or fountain, or what-not. And so I——"

"Oh!" said the King, grimly. "Well, they're *my* grooms!"

"I'm sorry. I thought in the circumstances——"

"Have them returned at once to the Royal Palace!" commanded the King, coldly. "To the Dutch Garden," he added, after a moment's thought.

At this point the Court Chamberlain burst excitedly into the room with a large book.

"I've got it, your Majesty," he announced proudly. "It's a *Basilisk!*"

"Basilisk? Never heard of it."

"I have," said the Vizier, anxious to instal himself in favour once more. "But I thought they were extinct."

"Well, this one isn't," snapped the King. "Be quiet!"

The Vizier, who was having no luck, subsided into silence, while the Court Chamberlain read out long extracts about: "*Ye Basiliske, sommetymes called ye Cockatrice*," and which described perfectly the appearance and attributes of Koko, late the Thingumabob. "*Hys brethe*," he read, "*burneth with fyre, and whoso meeteth ye glance of his eyes is straightewav turned to stone, and so too all livynge thynges save onlie ye wesle*."

"What's a wesle?" asked the King.

The Vizier opened his mouth and then shut it again. He was not taking any chances this time.

"Wesle! Wesle!" repeated the Chamberlain, thoughtfully. "I don't know. Some witch's invention, I should think."

The King reached up for a large tome on "The Fauna of Sparmania, Indigenous and Magical," edited by a local naturalist. With some annoyance he discovered that a Wesle was not mentioned and so turned to Basilisk. Under Basilisk he found "See Cockatrice." When he reached Cockatrice and discovered "See Basilisk," he threw the book across the room and ordered the Vizier to have the author arrested next day for Lèse-Majesté and Imbecility.

The Chamberlain then returned to his reading and disclosed the fact that a Basilisk could be killed by the crowing of a cock.

"But we daren't kill it," objected the

King, very angrily. "In fact, we'd better have all cocks near the Palace destroyed." He swore to himself with feeling, and mentioned a few of the deaths he would like the Emperor of Granada to die, most of them preceded by lingering and loathsome diseases.

He was just feeling better when a servant was shown in, and with many stammerings reported that some slight carelessness in the stables had again resulted in a fire in Koko's cage. It had of course been at once extinguished, but Ali, while helping, had been unfortunately immobilized and was now a statue.

"Ali a statue?" ejaculated the King, momentarily overcome.

"Yes, your Majesty. He was just holding a squirter, when the Thing-umabob——"

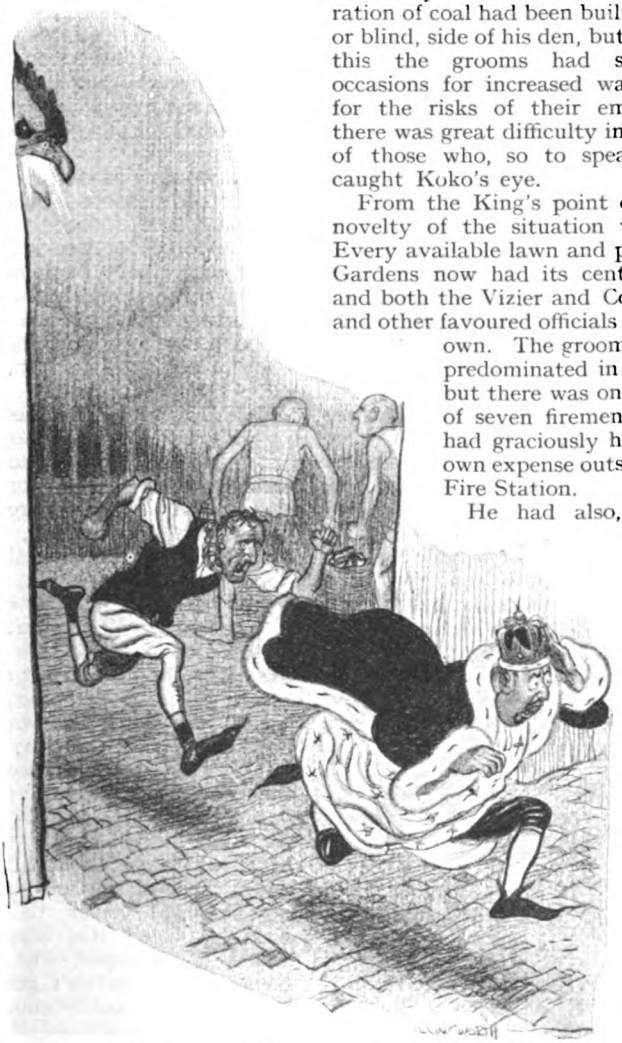
The King suddenly brightened. Then he slapped his knee.

"The Rose Garden!" he cried. 'Instead of the sundial."

The servant stared for a moment in uncomprehending surprise; then added:—

"And one of the firemen, your Highness, also ventured too close and got looked at."

The King turned to the Vizier. He felt perhaps he had been a little harsh to him lately. 'You can have the fireman for that lawn of yours," he said, graciously. "He ought to do well as a fountain."



He didn't have to bother about Royalty taking precedence; the King had him beat by yards.

BY the end of a further fortnight the situation in Sparmania's Royal Palace had become strained. The Basilisk was now in a non-inflammable cage made of metal, so that the risk of fire had been considerably minimized, but his glance was as deadly as ever. A chute for the daily ration of coal had been built out at the back, or blind, side of his den, but notwithstanding this the grooms had struck on three occasions for increased wages to make up for the risks of their employment; and there was great difficulty in filling the places of those who, so to speak, inadvertently caught Koko's eye.

From the King's point of view, too, the novelty of the situation was wearing off. Every available lawn and path in the Royal Gardens now had its central stone figure, and both the Vizier and Court Chamberlain and other favoured officials had a few of their own. The groom *motif*, of course, predominated in all the sculpture, but there was one very fine group of seven firemen which the King had graciously had erected at his own expense outside the Municipal Fire Station.

He had also, at the Vizier's suggestion, invited a number of courtiers, whom he disliked or who were suspected of intriguing, to a fine tea, to be followed by a private view of his new pet. The Court Chamberlain, being of an economical turn of mind, had suggested that it would be cheaper if the tea came after the private view, but the King had magnanimously vetoed this.

The party was a great success; and the King opened up a new wing of the Palace as a sculpture gallery.

But after that everything began to fall a little flat. To begin with, one could not go a yard anywhere without coming up against a stone animal; and the King never dared kick a cat—in case it had ceased to be a cat and had been just put there as a joke.

Even the satisfaction of being able to write to the Emperor of Granada and say that Koko was still there was wearing off, and occasionally the King found himself thinking he had better import a cock, kill this Koko nuisance, and take the consequences of war and invasion.

IN the middle of this delicate state of affairs, the Court Magician one day suddenly reappeared. His reappearance caused a certain amount of confusion, firstly because he materialized in the centre of the dinner table, and secondly, because he could not be made to understand for some while that he had been away longer than ten minutes.

The King, however, was desperately glad to see him, and showed it so openly that the Magician, being a shrewd fellow, seized the opportunity to demand successfully a grant of money for the purchase of some new spell-weaving apparatus he had long set his heart upon. When this had been put in writing (the Magician's idea), the excited King dragged him off to his private room and told him the whole story.

"And you must devise some plan," he concluded, "by which we can keep this Basilisk here to satisfy that Granada hound"—the King had got a little worked up during his narrative—"and yet can avoid this infernal inconvenience. Why, only to-day I spent hours trying to think of a place for the statues of four small boys in a climbing attitude at the top of a fence. A most difficult position to——"

"Well, your Majesty," said the Court Magician, withdrawing, "I'll see what I can do to-morrow."

"Well, good night!" said the King, and added: "Er—by the way, you'll be *here* to-morrow, won't you? I mean ——"

"Why, yes."

"I mean, you're quite well? You don't feel another disappearance coming on or anything?"

"No!"

"Splendid! And you'll be careful with this Basilisk yourself, won't you? I mean, I sha'n't know where to put *you*, if you make a slip. Every niche is full. Unless"—he grew thoughtful—"unless I put you on a pedestal at the foot of the main staircase. You could hold a torch and——"

The Magician felt that the conversation was becoming slightly morbid.

"Basilisks are child's play to me," he remarked coldly, and departed.

The next morning the Magician had an interview with the King and the Vizier.

"I shall visit the Basilisk this afternoon," he began. "I am just making a little—er—gadget which will settle the matter."

"Good!" The King rubbed his hands. Then he recollected something. "Er—by the way, what is a wesle?" he asked.

"It is old spelling for weasel. I shall need one of them too."

"Weasel! Of course! What a fool I was! Vizier! A bag of gold for the man who brings a weasel to the Palace by lunch!"

Lunch was considerably delayed that day owing to the presence in the Palace courtyard of seventy-two peasants each with a bag containing a weasel. Considerable disorder prevailed when the Royal Treasurer refused to pay out seventy-two bags of gold, and many of the disappointed peasants freed their weasels in the courtyard as a protest. The Palace was full of stray weasels for some weeks afterwards, which were continually popping out of unexpected corners and frightening the Ladies-in-Waiting. In fact, the Court Poet composed a rhyme about it, which you may hear, in a garbled version, to this day.

TOWARDS the middle of the afternoon a small but excited group was assembled outside the gate leading into the stable yard, which now wore a very neglected appearance. There were the King, the Vizier, the Chamberlain, a boy holding a weasel, the Magician with a large sort of shield covered with sacking, another boy holding a bag, and two nervous firemen.

"But we aren't going *in*, are we?" objected the King at this point. "I mean, *I'm* valuable. I can get another Vizier, of course"—he looked meditatively at the Vizier, who glanced nervously at the Chamberlain—"but I feel, myself, I——"

"You'll all be quite safe with these," said the Magician shortly, and from the big bag he handed the King, the Vizier, and the Chamberlain each a large bundle of a herb, which he explained was called rue, and a piece of smoked glass.

"There, I never thought of smoked glass," chatted the King. "I say," he added in a whisper, "what about the two boys? They haven't got anything. I've been having trouble enough with parents as it is, and I——"

"I'm not a complete fool," retorted the Magician, angrily. "They're both orphans."

"Oh!" said the King, and very gingerly he and the Vizier with their protective herbs and their smoked glass crept into the stable yard, which was littered with little statuettes of dogs, cats, and other incautious animals. The Chamberlain, who was not such a fool as he looked, stopped unobserved at the last moment to tie up his shoelace, on the right side of the door.

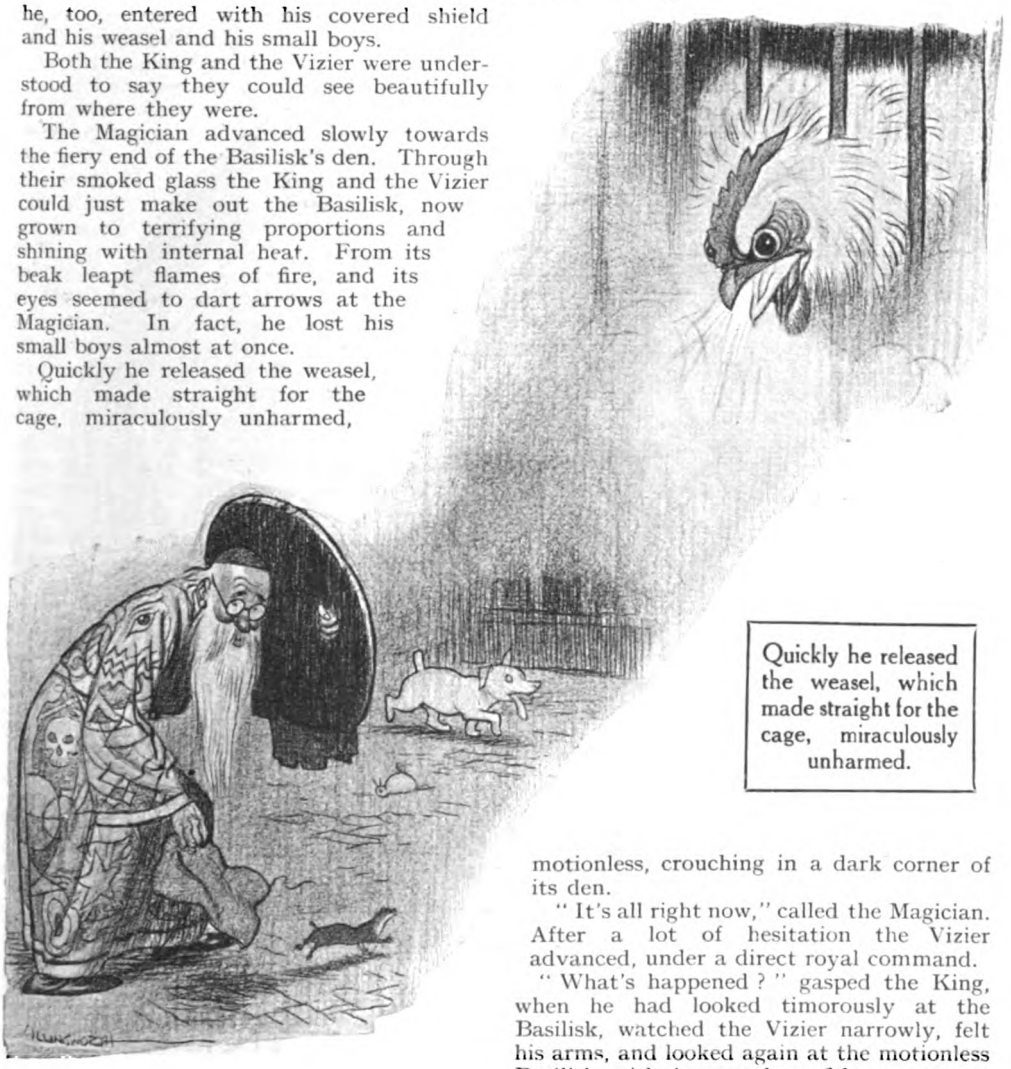
"Go nearer, if you can't see properly," said the Magician kindly to the others, as

he, too, entered with his covered shield and his weasel and his small boys.

Both the King and the Vizier were understood to say they could see beautifully from where they were.

The Magician advanced slowly towards the fiery end of the Basilisk's den. Through their smoked glass the King and the Vizier could just make out the Basilisk, now grown to terrifying proportions and shining with internal heat. From its beak leapt flames of fire, and its eyes seemed to dart arrows at the Magician. In fact, he lost his small boys almost at once.

Quickly he released the weasel, which made straight for the cage, miraculously unharmed,



Quickly he released the weasel, which made straight for the cage, miraculously unharmed.

while to the two onlookers' amazement the Basilisk quailed, its breath died down, and it retired into a corner.

Under cover of this attack the Magician advanced, and when in front of the cage drew the sacking off his shield and held it up in front of the Basilisk, giving tongue to a weird exclamation which the Vizier said was a spell, but which the King maintained was simply foul language.

There was a sudden crowing shriek from the Basilisk as it glared at the Magician, and then silence. The smoke and flames died away completely: the Basilisk remained motionless, crouching in a dark corner of its den.

"It's all right now," called the Magician. After a lot of hesitation the Vizier advanced, under a direct royal command.

"What's happened?" gasped the King, when he had looked timorously at the Basilisk, watched the Vizier narrowly, felt his arms, and looked again at the motionless Basilisk with increased confidence.

"A little trick," explained the Magician, and displayed his uncovered shield for the first time. "My shield is a looking-glass. He's turned *himself* to stone!"

"B-but——" quavered the King, not understanding.

"He's quite safe now. And yet he's still there in his cage, and you can write every month to the Emperor of Granada and say so."

The King got the idea.

"Wonderful!" he ejaculated. "Wonderful! You deserve a public vote of thanks and a—— I know what I'll do, *I'll* erect a *statue* to you!"

NAPOLEON AS A CHESS-PLAYER

By

HENRY E. DUDENEY

LORD ROSEBERY in his book, "Napoleon: The Last Phase," makes the following remarks concerning Napoleon Bonaparte as a chess player: "At chess he was eminently unskilful, and it taxed all the courtliness of his suite to avoid defeating him; a simple trickery which he sometimes perceived."

Lieut.-Colonel F. S. Whitton, writing in the July number of *The Nineteenth Century and After* on the subject of "Chess in History

and Fiction," says: "Lord Rosebery rather makes merry at Napoleon's chess at St. Helena, but competent critics of the game have much admired the skill displayed in the Scotch Gambit game of the fallen Emperor which has come down to us." The point is an interesting one for consideration.

It is well known that Napoleon was an enthusiastic chess player, and the chess table and chessmen which he used during the exile on St. Helena were in the possession of Mr. George Vanderbilt. There is a ghastly incident attached to the souvenir. When the physicians were making a post-mortem examination of the dead Emperor they pulled open one of the drawers of the little table and laid the heart upon it, and the stains of blood are still visible. The relics belonged to a Mr. McHenry before they came into Mr. Vanderbilt's possession.

Here is one of the actual games reported to have been played by Napoleon against General Bertrand:—

SCOTCH GAMBIT.

Napoleon.	General Bertrand.
White.	*Black.*
1. P to K 4	1. P to K 4
2. Kt to K B 3	2. Kt to Q B 3
3. P to Q 4	3. Kt takes P
4. Kt takes Kt	4. P takes Kt
5. B to Q B 4	5. B to B 4
6. P to Q B 3	6. Q to K 2
7. Castles	7. Q to K 4 (*a*)
8. P to B 4	8. P takes P (dis ch)
9. K to R sq	9. P takes P
10. B takes P (ch)	10. K to Q sq (*b*)
11. P takes Q	11. P takes R(queens)
12. B takes Kt	12. B to K 2 (*c*)
13. Q to Kt 3	13. P to Q R 4

White mates in five moves (*d*).

NOTES.

(*a*) An inferior move, but, of course, Black cannot play Q takes P on account of R to K sq. winning the Q. (*b*) Obviously if 10. K takes B, then 11. P takes Q (ch), and 12. B takes P. (*c*) If 12. R takes B, then 13. Q to Q 5, etc. (*d*) By 14. R to B 8 (ch), 14. B takes R; 15. B to Kt 5 (ch), 15. B to K 2; 16. B takes B (ch), 16 K takes B; 17. Q to B 7 (ch), and 18. Q to B 8 mate.

Our second game is reported to have been played by the Emperor on the night of the Duc d'Enghien's execution, which was in 1804, the same year that Napoleon was crowned Emperor.

ALPINE OPENING.

Mme. De Remusat.	Napoleon.
White.	*Black.*
1. P to Q 3	1. Kt to K B 3
2. P to K 4	2. Kt to Q B 3
3. P to K B 4	3. P to K 4 (*a*)
4. P takes P	4. Q Kt takes P
5. Kt to Q B 3	5. K Kt to Kt 5
6. P to Q 4	6. Q to R 5 (ch) (*b*)
7. P to K Kt 3	7. Q to K B 3
8. Kt to K R 3 (*c*)	8. Kt to B 6 (ch)
9. K to K 2	9. Kt takes Q P (ch)
10. K to Q 3	10. Kt to K 4 (ch)
11. K takes Kt (*d*)	11. B to Q B 4 (ch)(*e*)
12. K takes B	12. Q to Q Kt 3 (ch)
13. K moves	13. Q to Q 3 (mate)

NOTES.

(*a*) The affray at once begins. (*b*) A telling shot which causes dire disaster. (*c*) 8. B to K B 4 would have been better to prevent the threatened mate. (*d*) The very thickest of the fight, and into the jaws of death goes White. (*e*) As second sacrifice, and victory is gained.

If these games were really played by Napoleon, there cannot be the slightest doubt that he was an excellent player. They exhibit considerable imagination and brilliancy, and no master would be ashamed to have played them. It is true that his opponents gave him opportunities, but brilliancy in chess often has the form of taking advantage of the opponent's weak play. Undoubtedly these are two delightful little games.

The late Rev. H. R. Haweis, in the Introduction to a "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte," writes as follows:—

"From king to courtesan—and the distance in those days was not so great—people to him (Napoleon) were mere chessmen. He would play for checkmate, then for stalemate, and lastly he would fight till there was not a man left on the board. By the rules of the game, the kings could not be killed, so when not a man was left he took up his place in the extreme corner on board the *Bellerophon* intact, wrote a cringing letter to our Prince Regent, and surrendered at discretion."

But whether Haweis was aware that the Emperor was actually a player of the game is not known. Napoleon III., like his renowned uncle, was also very fond of the game, and played a good deal; he was, however, a bad player and used to receive a knight from those who were far from being in the first class.

EXPERIENCES OF
A BOND STREET JEWELLER

"OUR" TIARA

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

I.

MRS. CORWEN has reminded me of the theft of a design drawn by her. The theft led incidentally to my marriage, so in its way this particular experience may be regarded by me as of importance. Old Mr. Rappington had a sincere affection and admiration for Miss Esdaile, as my wife was then. He was a rough diamond in his youth, cut and polished in Bond Street. I have never met a man more scrupulously honest in big and small matters. I have said already that he opposed window-dressing. During his life and for some time afterwards the name of the firm advertised itself upon the two screened windows facing Bond Street. Rappington and Son had the right to style themselves "Crown Jewellers," but as everybody who counted knew this it was hardly necessary to mention it.

I cannot recall when our more fashionable customers began to look askance at the heavy Victorian settings. The great change came about slowly, beginning in Paris, in the Rue de la Paix. I can remember Mr. Rappington sending for me and placing in my hands a most exquisite ring, a cabochon emerald surrounded by tiny brilliants set in platinum. He then showed me a miniature watch, made by Breguet, also surrounded by brilliants set in the same way.

"Could you do work like that?" he asked.

I hated to say "no" and I dared not say "yes." My head was slightly swelled because he had sent for me. Young as I was, I had made good, and I knew it. In our setting-room I was a marked man, simply because I possessed a manipulative skill which is not entirely a matter of training.

I compromised.

"I might, sir, in time."

Little did I think then that this exquisite craftsmanship was about to revolutionize our trade.

"Have a go at it," he urged.

I did. My experiments cost the firm money and time. But they gave me a tremendous start in our setting-room, where competition was keen. The older men, conservative like most good craftsmen, regarded our massive settings much as they regarded the roast beef of Old England. To these moss-backs the new Paris craftsmanship was flimsy, a mere side dish—"kickshaw."

Miss Esdaile did not share their moth-eaten opinions. It is a fact that her chance marched with my chance. Possibly her enthusiasm inspired enthusiasm in me.

I had just mastered the new tricks when the old-fashioned "fenders" of tiaras became anathema to the younger ladies. Again Mr. Rappington sent for me. I found Miss Esdaile with him. They were staring at a huge tiara, a scintillating mass of magnificent diamonds, pearls, and sapphires. Mr. Rappington held in his hand a pencil drawing, which he handed to me. It seemed to me then—and I was not far

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Mr. Rappington handed me a pencil drawing. "Want to make that, Corwen?"

wrong—a fairy-like design for a diadem that might have been worn by Titania. I make no doubt that I beamed with delight as I assimilated its beauties of form and delicacy.

"Want to make that, Corwen?"

"Sir!"

Miss Esdaile laughed. We had met several times, professionally, but I looked up at her as a small star twinkling high above me. She has admitted since that this pleased her. She did not know it till long afterwards, but I educated myself after meeting her, plodding diligently through the poets and our greater novelists, trying to attain to a standard in literature set unconsciously by her. She had begun her grown-up life as a governess in the family of a nobleman, taking up designing (for which she had surprising aptitudes) as a hobby.

"You have to make it out of *this*." He indicated the tiara. "I'll leave you and Miss Esdaile together."

He bustled off.

"It can be done," said Miss Esdaile, "and you can do it. We can't use all these stones, but we must pick the finest."

"To whom does this tiara belong?"

"I don't know, but one can make a sort of guess."

I couldn't—and I said so.

"It doesn't belong to the Old Guard, Mr. Corwen, because they would consider it sacrilege to tamper with it. I think it must belong to some young swell who is going to marry a pretty girl with a small head. Putting that on a small head would crush it. You might as well put battlements upon the Taj Mahal."

I looked up the Taj Mahal that night in an encyclopædia.

We set to work counting the stones. My head had never been so near her head before.

II.

I MADE the tiara—my first really big piece—and it cost me the friendship of a fellow-worker in our setting-room. He was my senior, and he would have had my job in ordinary circumstances. But he had not yet mastered the *technique* of the new French setting. We had a most disagreeable row, caused by his ridiculous jealousy, and he turned his back on me. I remember how upset I was and how indignant. When the tiara was finished and approved, neither Miss Esdaile nor I had the vaguest notion what happy young matron would wear it. I can only conclude that secrecy was imposed upon the Rappingtons.

It was part of my duty to hand over design and piece together. I may have left the design on my bench. I had no occasion to look at it when I began to put the final touches to the setting of the stones. I searched for the drawing and failed to find it. A gust of wind might have swept it to the floor, but in that case it could hardly have escaped the notice of our youngest apprentice, the "sweeper-up." Anyway, it was gone, and I anticipated a wigging for my carelessness. Both partners were so pleased with my work that I escaped with an admonition. They dismissed from their minds a trivial matter—and so did I.

Miss Esdaile found out, much to her satisfaction, why secrecy had been imposed upon the Rappingtons. The huge tiara belonged to a sprig of nobility who walked untrodden ways in terror of his mamma, a very formidable Victorian personage, recently widowed. When the young man came of age he found himself in possession of this tiara, which was not an heirloom, although regarded as such by his mother. Unknown to her, he had fallen in love with a chorister at the Jollity Theatre. I understand that to-day these nymphs of Terpsichore are regarded as eligible and potential mothers of belted earls and puissant marquesses. This poor young man's mamma did not so regard them when the Great White Queen sat upon her throne. I shall speak of our chorister as Miss Nancy Nitouche, because—so Miss Esdaile assured me (not without a twinkle in her eye)—the young lady was a respecter of her own pretty person. She demanded from her lover a plain gold ring, aware that much else would go with it.

The engagement was announced; the marriage followed. A youthful countess was seen at the opera wearing "our" tiara. She wore it, so Miss Esdaile informed me, upon every possible occasion. It attracted a deal of notice, and made good business for the firm. Within a year I had to reset at least half-a-dozen tiaras, and thought of myself as a public benefactor. But within the year the youthful countess bolted from her husband—and not alone. She took with her a handsome young Guardsman *and her tiara*.

Tempests raged in teapots. The youthful earl, with all Mayfair behind him, serried ranks of dowagers, tried to prove in a Court of Law that the tiara was an heirloom—or, rather, made out of an heirloom. Miss Nitouche had left behind a rope of pearls, even more valuable than the tiara, which she admitted was not hers. That weighted the scales heavily in her favour. She won her case and was divorced about six months afterwards.

Now all this fuss had been a wonderful advertisement for the firm, and every

illustrated paper in the kingdom had made our tiara familiar to the public. It was almost as well known as the Koh-i-noor. It " boomed " Miss Esdaile as a designer.

Then we heard that it was to be offered for sale at Christie's.

III.

IT fetched more than it was worth to the trade, some fifteen thousand guineas. A well-known dealer bought it on commission. He made no secret of that; but he declined to make public the name of the owner. Gossip had it that it would cross the Atlantic and be seen shortly in the grand tier of the Metropolitan Opera House. Miss Esdaile and I were sad about that.

Shortly afterwards a man accosted me as I was coming out of the side door of our factory. He seemed a gentleman-like person, but I failed to " place " him. He introduced himself as Mr. Levison, which has a Hebrew tang to it. Personally, I have always found Jews delightfully pleasant to deal with, well-informed, courteous, and sympathetic.

" I understand," he said, " that you, Mr. Corwen, made that famous tiara which was sold the other day at Christie's. If you did, will you allow me to congratulate you ? "

I admit that this opening gambit warmed the cockles of my heart, but I wondered how he knew, because my name—somewhat to my chagrin—had never crept into print.

" Could you," he continued, " make a replica ? "

" If I were instructed to do so by my employers."

" Surely you do not work for them after hours ? "

" Often, but not always."

" You could take reasonable time over this. If I, for instance, supplied the stones——"

I cut him short, not uncivilly, explaining that I had to consider the interests of the firm at *all* hours. The design belonged to them. Very rarely replicas of big pieces were made, but I had never made one. He listened pleasantly enough, offered me a cigar, and we parted company. Perhaps I ought to have told the Rappingtons. I didn't, because they might think that I was consulting my own interests, tooting my own little horn, as the saying goes. However, I did tell Miss Esdaile, and she thought the matter too trivial to be discussed. I had told Mr. Levison that the design was lost. The owner of the tiara would not be likely to give his permission to have it copied, even if I could find him or her.

Dates have never appealed to me except at dessert. It must have been some time afterwards when old Mr. Rappington summoned me to his private room, which is to-day *mine*. He had some legal-looking papers on his desk.

" Alf—you must get out your ' blacks.' Prepare for a shock. You will never again see an old friend."

I turned pale. Upon my word I thought that something dreadful had happened to Miss Esdaile.

" Tch ! Tch ! The famous tiara, which I'm sure you looked upon as flesh of your flesh, has been stolen ; and by this time is broken up. Luckily for the owner, it was insured against all loss. The insurance people are bothering me, confound 'em. It was sold for fifteen thousand at Christie's, and insured, so they tell me, for ten. They want to know what it cost us. I have that on my books. But they also want to know if any replica was made. I hate to ask you such a question, but did you, out of hours, make one ? I'll stake my life you didn't."

" I didn't, but I was asked to do so."

The Chief whistled.

" When ? Where ? How ? "

I told him.

" Alf, my boy, there's a smell of the rodent about this which I don't like. Well, well, it's none of our business."

" But the police, sir ? "

" I understand they are at fault. Scotland Yard doesn't advertise its failures. Why should it ? It's an odd thing, but breaking up that old tiara seems to have brought bad luck to a lot of people."

" Not to us, sir."

" As you say—not to us. The boy had an appalling row with his mother over it ; then he lost it and his wife. The wife had to sell it to pay that Guardsman's debts. It has been stolen from Lawson——"

" Lawson, sir ? "

" Didn't I tell you that was the name of the man claiming the insurance money ? "

" You didn't mention it. Lawson is rather like Levison."

" So it is. That must be mere coincidence. One more question : Do you think you could identify any of the big stones ? "

" I believe I could, sir—the three pear-shaped pearls, and the biggest sapphire. The pearls were not perfect and the sapphire had one or two scratches on its under facets."

" M'm. Good boy. Always keep your eyes open and your mouth shut. We may hear more of this ; we may not. So far the business, dirty or clean, has been kept out of the papers."

He dismissed me with a friendly pat on the shoulder.

IV.

I TOLD Miss Esdaile—nobody else. To my surprise, she was much upset, either on my account or her own.

"Our tiara broken up!" she wailed out.

"Perhaps it isn't."

"Of course it is. How hateful! To think that I shall never see it again."

"Mr. Rappington, tough old nut, too, links up bad luck with it."

"And so do I; don't you?"

It was in my mind to tell her that it had brought us together, but I didn't. I was still a craftsman; she was an artist. She says now that she knew how it was with me from the first. If she did—and I carry an open mind about that—she kept me in proper order. She admits that she was not sure of her own feelings, and that I do believe. And she was quite sure of her mother's feelings—a stiff and starched old gentlewoman who, on the rare occasions when we met, seemed to look over me instead of at me.

Very soon after this I read a paragraph in one of the papers announcing the return to the stage of Miss Nancy Nitouche. In those days nobody was "featured" (as we understand the word) except the swells. But in her way she was a swell, and her return to the stage—of which, mind you, she was not a distinguished ornament—set the gossips' tongues a-wagging. After she was divorced she had not married the co-respondent. But everybody knew that *our* tiara had been sacrificed to pay a spendthrift's debts. She had dropped her title after the divorce. Somehow—explain it as you please—the great British Public felt sorry for her, and expressed their sympathy in no uncertain voice when she reappeared at the Jollity in a very engaging little part. Beatrix—I had Miss Esdaile's permission to call her that—invited me to dine with her and go to the Jollity afterwards. This was a daring thing to do in the 'nineties; and her mother knew nothing about it. During the first act I saw Beatrix scribbling a few lines on a visiting-card, which she gave to an attendant, together with a coin that might have been a florin. When the curtain fell she said, calmly:—

"I have sent round my card to Miss Nitouche. I have told her that I designed and that you made her tiara. I asked if she would see us."

Her initiative slightly distressed me. I had never passed through a stage door. I looked with awe upon the Crutch and Toothpick young men who enjoyed these privileges. Still, the ordeal had to be faced. The attendant came back before the second act began. She said primly: "Miss Nitouche will be pleased to see you, miss, and the gentleman, after the show is over." Beatrix beamed at her. I did not.

We were shown into a small dressing-room and I found myself blushing. Miss Nitouche had not covered up her tights nor removed the grease-paint. She smiled delightfully at both of us.

"You two dear things made my tiara?"

"Mr. Corwen made it—every bit of it, and he loved making it; didn't you, Alfred?"

I mumbled something. Miss Nitouche laughed.

"I want to talk to both of you, but I must clear out of this in two jiffs. Manager's orders. Will you have supper with me?"

"We should love to," said Beatrix.

If her mother had heard her!

"We three can squeeze into my brougham. It's outside. Pop in and wait for me."

I found myself in the brougham before I knew where I was. I was so rattled that I grabbed a hand that was, well, handy. Beatrix made no protest, but I heard her snickering.

"Isn't this thrilling?" she whispered.

"Why does she want to talk to us?"

"Because we're dear things. Now, Alfred, you and I have embarked upon a voyage of discovery. Behave like a little man—and don't look seasick till the winds whistle and the tempests roar. If you have a squirmishy feeling inside, so have I. I say, she's most *awfully* pretty; naughty, *perhaps*, but ever so nice."

"But your mother, Beatrix!"

"My mother is in bed at Brighton. I have my latchkey. You don't seem to understand that this is my night out—and I mean to make the most of it. If you have nothing to say, *smile*. Your smile is an asset."

She prattled on till Miss Nitouche joined us. She looked far prettier with the paint off, and squeezed in next me. We went off at a spanking pace.

I had to pinch myself to make sure that I was not dreaming. Nancy and Beatrix talked about the show. That gave me time to pull myself together. I was tolerably self-possessed when I followed the two ladies into a charming flat. It was comforting to reflect that a lady, once a countess, who had worn our tiara, was not impoverished.

We supped together, with no servant in the room. There were oysters, I remember, and champagne, and a ragout of chicken in a chafing-dish. Nancy said:—

"You know that I sold my tiara and that it has been stolen. Do you know anything more?"

She looked at me, and I replied that we didn't.

Miss Nitouche smiled delightfully at both of us.
"You two dear things made my tiara?"
"Mr. Corwen made it—and he loved making it," said Beatrix.

"I don't believe it has been stolen."

An oyster came within an ace of slipping into my windpipe. She went on excitedly:—

"I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world, but I tell you it's an accursed thing. There is something evil about it, or in it."

"In it?" I echoed, feebly.

"I'll tell you something. When I was a perfect lady, or trying to pretend to be one, I met a man who had lived most of his life in India. He took me in to dinner, and I was wearing my tiara. He was tremendously interested in the big sapphire. Now, Mr.

Corwen, when you were making the tiara did you have any bad luck ?"

I wanted to answer her question in the affirmative, but I couldn't. To my amazement Beatrix said positively :—

"He had an awful row with his best friend."

"But that had nothing to do with the tiara ?"

"Yes, it had. He was jealous, detestably jealous, simply because you, a much younger man, were given a job that he couldn't have done half so well."

"Anything else ?" asked our hostess.

"He lost my design. That might have got him into serious trouble."

"Lost it ?"

"It was never found, Miss Nitouche."

"You will think me silly, superstitious. That man from India—he was a great traveller. Sapphires come from India, don't they ?"

"From Ceylon mostly."

She nodded. I can't repeat what she went on to say, but I gathered that after dinner the man from India had examined the sapphire and asked several questions about it, which her husband, not she, had answered. His grandfather had bought it in Ceylon for a very low price considering its size. He had bought other gems, notably the pear-shaped pearls and a number of diamonds. All these gems were set by his orders in the big tiara that we had broken up. The piece had never been an heirloom. Not one member of the family had associated the sapphire with bad luck, and yet bad luck had dogged grandfather, son, and grandson.

"What sort of bad luck ?" I asked.

"Rows—endless rows over nothing really important ; and at the back of all of them—jealousy, unreasonable jealousy. I'm sure I can trust both of you. My mother-in-law was furious with her son, not over me, but over the tiara, which had been locked up in Mr. Rappington's safe for years. She didn't want to wear it herself ; she chattered with rage because my poor Jacko insisted on having it reset to give to me. He did give it to me. *I wish he hadn't.* As soon as it was mine I had an appalling row with him. About what ? Nothing. We became insanely jealous of each other without cause. You look astonished, Mr. Corwen—and no wonder. One doesn't talk like this to strangers. But you aren't strangers. When I got your message, Miss Esdaile, I knew that. When I saw you coming through my door, something told me that you were friends, that you were going to help me. There is more than chance in our meeting to-night."

She spoke vehemently, half-smiling, half-frowning. The smiles were for us ; the frowns were for herself, because I'm certain she was distressed at speaking, *being forced to speak*, so intimately. She had forgotten that she was our hostess. She had placed her elbows on the table and her head between her two hands. She was staring hard at me, trying to read my thoughts.

"Did you make it up with your friend ?" she asked, abruptly.

"No—we drifted apart. He left our setting-room. He is working, I believe, for some other firm."

A CURIOUS silence followed. Writing now, thirty years after the event, with the detachment that only time can give, I think I can say, humbly, that I know myself and I know the faithful companion of so many years. I'm a very humdrum person ; she is practical in all things, far more so than I am. But we believed then, and we believe still, that at this first meeting with Nancy Nitouche all three of us were just leaves upon the mighty current of Destiny, swept irresistibly onward in a common direction, having at the moment no *sense* of direction, only that of movement. Why, forty-eight hours before, if any man had told me that Miss Esdaile intended to take advantage of her mother's absence and take me out to dinner and then on to a musical comedy, and that we should find ourselves supping alone with a lady who had been—and still was—the talk of the town, I should have told him that he was stark mad. Yet so it was.

Bathos followed. Nancy sighed, removed her elbows from the tablecloth, and said in her beguiling voice :—

"Do have some chicken ; it's so good."

The spell was broken. She entertained us charmingly. We went away, promising to come again. Before we left her sitting-room, I saw upon the baby-grand piano a large framed photograph of the youthful earl whom she called "Jacko." He had a jolly, boyish face which I recognized at once, because I had seen it so often in the illustrated papers. I asked no questions.

Taking Beatrix back to her mother's tiny flat in Kensington, I asked her to marry me, and she accepted, valiantly, the very little a struggling young fellow had to offer.

A memorable evening !

V.

OUR marriage took place long after this ; and the objections raised to it by Mrs. Esdaile are not relevant to this narrative. I woke up next morning determined to "carry on" and to carry off my brave, clever little woman.

Before we two met Nancy again, she secured even more publicity, which, inci-

dentally, affected agreeably her salary. The story of the stolen tiara was published and made a sensation. I am hazy as to how this came about, but the insurance people, not Scotland Yard, started Nancy's theory that the tiara had not been stolen. We—the two Rappingtons and I—were in the thick of the trouble. For a few hours I, if you please, was accorded the *rôle* of "leading man," and I played a fairly easy part none too well. The insurance people sent for old Mr. Rappington and me. I was confronted with a man whom I identified as the Mr. Levison who had asked me to make a replica of the tiara. This enterprising gentleman had bought the tiara at Christie's under the name of Lawson. He tried to bluster suspicion away from himself with a plausible tale. Cleverness and a knavish effrontery exuded from every pore of his skin. He had wanted, so he said, two tiaras, one to sell in England or France, and the other to sell in America. He admitted boldly that he had changed his name from Levison to Lawson; and he declared as boldly that he did business under both names. Old Mr. Rappington said to me afterwards that this scheme of selling two tiaras was sound enough. If Lawson had bought the original tiara and had it copied nobody could object. Face to face with me, he affirmed that he had abandoned the idea of making two tiaras. He stuck to that like a limpet, and swaggered out of the room.

Then, for the first time, the man who represented the insurance company laid his cards on the table. Lawson had bought the tiara at public auction; he had insured it; he hoped to sell it to some private customer at a fair profit. He was carrying it in a small bag, actually on his way to his customer—who subsequently corroborated his story—and coming out of one of the Metropolitan stations, when a woman, heavily veiled, stopped him, pointed to a pocket-book lying on the pavement, and said: "I beg your pardon—is that yours?" Lawson bent down to pick up the pocket-book, which was not his, and instantly the woman snatched his small bag out of his hand, dived into the crowd, and was never seen again. Eye-witnesses testified to this audacious theft, including a policeman. Scotland Yard went to work. Nothing happened. It was certain, humanly speaking, that the tiara would be broken up; the stones composing it would be sold anywhere except in London—probably in Buenos Ayres or Valparaiso. The insurance people intended to pay the money. They would have done so, had it not been for my fortuitous remark that the names Levison and Lawson were almost synonyms.

We got as far as this—and no farther for a season.

VI.

I AM not a criminologist, but one of our leading criminal advocates told me the other day that in his immense experience the gentlemen who live by their wits have invariably a soft spot, like babies, in their heads. Lawson, or Levison, had such a soft spot. He knew that he was under surveillance; he knew that he must stay in London and brazen things out. But he couldn't keep away from the woman he loved, who didn't happen to love him. He had squandered a lot of money on her, but she wanted more and more, as such harpies always do.

Beatrix, clever little darling, put an idea into my thick head which I carried to old Mr. Rappington, and which he, in turn, passed on to the manager of the insurance company. She believed as Nancy did—and indeed as all of us did now—that Lawson had stolen his own tiara. But she went a step beyond this, simply because the loss of her design had annoyed her far more than it had annoyed me and the partners. That *rankled*. She suggested that Lawson might have succeeded in getting a replica made. He might, for reasons of his own, still obscure to us, have run to ground the lost design. Well, that seemed to me grotesquely improbable. I had worked near a large window, often open. The drawing on thin paper had probably been whirled out of it. Beatrix, believing what she wanted to believe, nailing her flag to the mast called woman's intuition, accused the man who had been my friend and fellow-craftsman of stealing and keeping her design. If Lawson, acting on my information, had hunted up *him*, a replica might have been made. She concluded triumphantly: "And it wouldn't be a perfect replica, because he can't do your work."

Old Rappington was much more impressed than I was. I admit that I dismissed from my mind, very busy with other matters, what I held to be an untenable hypothesis. I'm afraid my little woman was annoyed with me. Anyway, she too went to work "on her own." *She hunted up my old friend.* How she wheedled the truth out of him, pledged as he must have been to secrecy, I don't know. But she did, bless her! And what she did led to the final climax. He was working for a rival establishment which used, now and again, her designs. It was easy enough to get at him; and I'm sure she had a sneaking sympathy for the poor devil and his wretched wife. I had gone steadily up; as steadily he had gone down. Anyway, he admitted to her that he had found

"Alfred, is this your tiara?"
It wasn't. It was the replica, and I said so without a moment's hesitation.

her design on my bench and had pocketed it because he wanted to get me into trouble with employers who had advanced me at his expense. Lawson had found him cruelly in need of money. Under heavy pressure he had made the replica, using real diamonds and *imitation pearls and sapphires;* all the stones had been supplied by Lawson, who said that the owner of a very valuable piece wanted a replica to wear abroad. Replicas are so often made for this purpose that Lawson's explanation held water.

My naughty Beatrix, after she captured the facts, did not lay them before me; she took them to old Mr. Rappington, and I believe he kissed her! They rushed off together to the insurance company, and everything I have set down would have come to light in a police-court if it hadn't been for that accursed sapphire. Cynics

may scoff. Let them! Millions of people believe firmly that certain gems have strange properties, beneficial and malefic. I rank myself amongst them.

Lawson, or Levison, was found in his rooms—dead. The woman who shot him was defended, as many will remember, by the ablest advocate of the day. It still remains a mystery to me why the tiara, which I believe caused the murder, was hardly mentioned during the course of the trial. The woman escaped the gallows under the well-sustained plea of insanity. *She had been driven mad by jealousy.* But Lawson, not she, had better reason to be jealous, and his jealousy, so half-a-dozen witnesses testified, had provoked in her a jealousy which drove her crazy. That was that.

ALMOST immediately after the trial was over, old Mr. Rappington sent for me. I gasped when I saw what was on our desk—the unmistakable case, pale blue velvet lined with white satin, that held "our" tiara. He did not introduce me to the tall, pale, distinguished-looking man that sat near his desk. Mr. Rappington opened the case.

"Alfred, is this your tiara?"

It wasn't. It was the replica, and I said so without a moment's hesitation.

The stranger nodded. Mr. Rappington closed the case—the original case, with the Rappington *imprimatur* on it.

"Have you seen these pearls before, my boy?"

He laid three pear-shaped pearls upon a velvet pad.

I examined them very carefully.

"Yes, sir. I set these three principal pearls above the big sapphire in our tiara."

The stranger said, curtly:—

"You can swear to that?"

"I can."

To my exasperation I was dismissed, but the head of the firm spared me a sleepless night. He sent for me again an hour later.

"That gentleman," he said, quietly, "is a big-wig whom you have never met before; and, if you meet him again, don't claim acquaintance. The replica of your tiara was found, after careful search, in the late Mr. Lawson's rooms. The pearls you identified were found also. Mr. Lawson's nephew, and heir, is claiming nothing from the insurance people. Mr. Lawson is dead."

"Did they find the big sapphire, sir?"

"I asked that question. It has not been found. The Yard is of opinion that Mr. Lawson must have sold it to a Cingalese gentleman who was in England not two months ago. The Yard knows, but does not wish their knowledge to be made public, that a similar sapphire was stolen many years ago from a temple not far from Satawaka. If you ever visit Ceylon, Alf, you may see that sapphire again. The Yard surmises that Mr. Lawson was such an optimist that he hoped to sell the replica of your tiara in South America, where he made a fortune which he did not think was large enough. Your tiara was so famous that the replica might, possibly, have been bought—*in our case*—without any testing of the sapphires and pearls. He took his chances about that. As our big-wig observed, this is one of the unpublished chapters in the history of crime."

Mr. Lawson's nephew, who called himself Levison, broke up the replica and sold the diamonds.

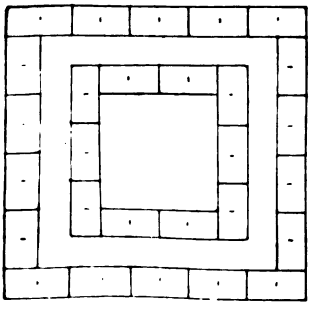
Nancy Nitouche, as everybody knows, remarried her "Jacko." If you take the trouble to look through the files of the *Court Journal*, you will find that among the guests who attended the wedding reception were Miss Esdaile and Mr. Alfred Corwen.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

885.—TWO DOMINO SQUARES.

ARRANGE the twenty-eight dominoes as shown in the diagram to form two squares so that the pips in every one of the eight sides shall add up alike. The dominoes being on the table one day recently I set myself the above task and found it very interesting. The constant addition must, of course, be within limits to make the puzzle possible, and it will be found interesting to find these limits. Of course, the dominoes need not be laid according to the rule, 6 against 6, blank against blank, and so on.



886.—VARIED SPELLINGS.

READERS may remember our inquiry (April and May, 1921) as to the different ways in which the English spelling of words produced the sound "shun," and the following nine cases were given: *Shun*, po*sition*, coer*cion*, ver*sion*, cu*shion*, conne*xion*, fal*chion*, lun*cheon*, and pas*sion*.

This has suggested the following inquiry on the same lines. How many different ways are there of spelling in English so as to produce the sound "a" (as in f*a*te, r*ai*n, m*ay*, etc.)? The reader will probably find without difficulty more variations than he at first expects.

887.—THE BIRTH OF BOADICEA.

A CORRESPONDENT (R. D.) proposes the following little puzzle. It is really very easy if you happen to see just how to deal with it. But doubtless a good many will be perplexed and amused.

Boadicea died 129 years after Cleopatra was born. Their united ages (that is, the combined years of their complete lives) were 100 years. Cleopatra died 30 B.C. When was Boadicea born?

888.—CHESS OR DRAUGHTS.

PLACE a King and a Pawn of each colour on the board so that White can force mate in two moves. Then substitute draughts for the chess pieces in exactly the same positions (Draughts King replacing the Chess King and Draughts man taking the place of Chess Pawn) so that White forces complete win in two moves.

889.—DIMINISHING WORDS.

I HAVE from time to time in these pages given puzzles with "Expanding Words" in which a new letter is added at each stage and by re-arrangement a new word formed. Thus, one example was the series: I, IT, TIE, RITE, INTER, RETAIN, CERTAIN, REACTION, CREMATION, IMPORTANCE. It has just occurred to me that a new form of puzzle is to reverse the process so that if we were given that final word "IMPORTANCE" we have, by dropping a letter at each stage, to find the words leading us back to one containing a single letter. It will be found interesting as an example to find regular diminishing words leading back from UNDESIRABLE. It requires some judgment to determine which letter shall be dropped at each stage.

A BATCH OF EASY PUZZLES—SOLUTIONS.

TWO ANAGRAMS.

THE letters in CART HORSE and MAD POLICY will form the words ORCHESTRA and DIPLOMACY.

DIVISION OF LABOUR.

LET the boy continue to carry one bag for one mile and a third, then hand it to the gentleman, who will carry it to the station. Also let the gardener carry his bag two miles and two-thirds, and then deliver it to the boy, who will carry it for the remaining distance. Then each of the three persons will have carried one bag two miles and two-thirds—an equal division of labour.

FATHERS AND SONS.

THERE were three men only to receive 2s. 6d. each, but one man was the son of the second and the grandson of the third. Therefore there were really two sons and two fathers.

HENS AND EGGS.

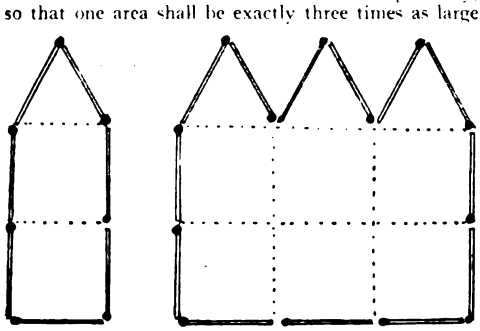
SEVEN hens would lay twenty-eight eggs in the period stated under the conditions.

WHERE IS IT?

IT will be noticed in the letter block puzzle that the letter "W" is missing, or, as Mr. Pringle explained, the answer is NOWHERE (no W here).

A MATCH PUZZLE.

THE illustration shows how two enclosures may be formed with thirteen and seven matches respectively, so that one area shall be exactly three times as large as the other. The dotted lines will show that one contains two squares and an equilateral triangle and the other six squares and three such triangles. The twelve horizontal and vertical matches have not been moved.



THE CYCLIST AND THE EGGS.

THE cyclist will not be able to eat even one egg on an empty stomach, unless he swallows it whole, for after the first mouthful the stomach will no longer be empty.

MORE MAGIC NUMBERS.

ARRANGE ten matches thus, F I V E; then take away the seven matches forming F E (7/10ths of the whole) and you will have I V or 4.

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

THERE must have been three wooden toys at 3d. each, fifteen tin toys at 2d. each, and forty-two bags of sweets at ½d. each.

AN EGG PUZZLE.

ONE of the two men had originally fourteen and the other ten eggs.

THE SQUARE OF SOLDIERS.

THE officer must have had 1975 men. When he formed a square 44 × 44 he would have 39 men over, and when he attempted to form a square 45 × 45 he would be 50 men short.

THE TWO D'S.

AS Mrs. Pringle explained, the capital D "speaks for itself." Thus: D. "I am on d." (Diamond).

CLIPPING THE COINS.

THE four coins, a sovereign, a shilling, a penny, and a farthing, have together the value of 1,013 farthings. If you cut away the fraction 53/1,013 from each coin you will have left 960/1,013 of each coin, and their total value will add up exactly £1.

PERPLEXITY No. 881.

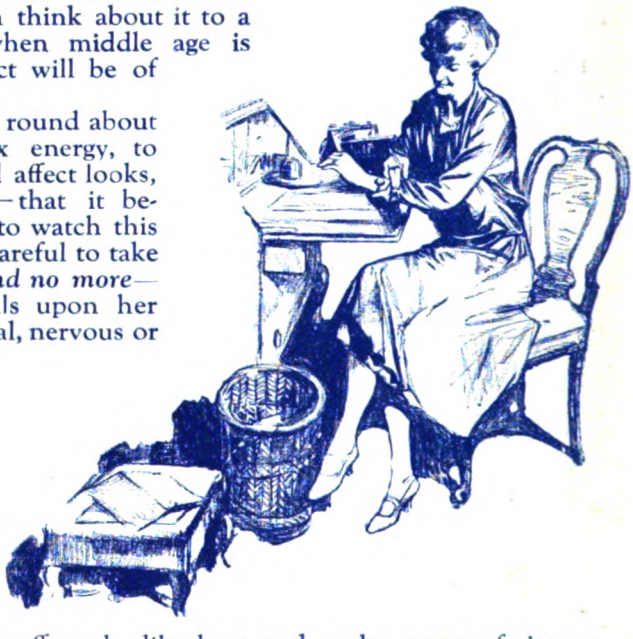
I FIND that my moves may be reduced from 30 to 26 moves, and this has been discovered by Rev E. A. Forbes and Mr. C. Wardhaugh.

RUDYARD KIPLING

FEB 5 1923

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

What expert dietitians say is VITAL at this age



Every woman must look to her diet sooner or later. Most women think about it to a certain extent, but when middle age is approaching this subject will be of vital importance to her.

So many forces operate round about that period to overtax energy, to break down health, and affect looks, figure and happiness — that it becomes a vital necessity to watch this matter. She must be careful to take *enough nourishment and no more*— to support all the calls upon her energies, whether mental, nervous or physical. Above all she has to curb that tendency to accumulate extra fat — so much greater in woman than man. Hence the experts emphasise to-day

a balanced diet

to supply *only*—and in their correct proportions — the needs for muscular and nervous effort, bodily heat and replacement of tissues. Just that, and not an ounce of surplus in any direction to run to fat or make for incipient debility, inefficiency or breakdown. That is why the medical profession consider

Horlick's Malted Milk is most valuable

for this purpose Laboratory tests have proved that Horlick's *is* a perfectly balanced food. It is also a complete food. Horlick s supplies in milk and cereals, all the essentials required by woman's complex organism: it is so prepared that it yields its great vitalising nourishment in perfect balance, and is therefore readily digested even at moments of extreme exhaustion

Take Horlick's at 11 a m. and maintain your energy during the day; take a glass last thing at night, it will induce sound rejuvenating sleep. That is why men and women of all ages rely on Horlick's. On long journeys, before and after strenuous exercise, in bad weather, Horlick's is invaluable for preventing fatigue and the consequent risk of chill and its many developments.

HORLICK'S
FITNESS

Call for a glass of Horlick's at the nearest café, restaurant or soda fountain. Obtainable everywhere in glass bottles at 2/-, 3/6, 8/6, 15/-. Also in tablet form in glass pocket flasks.

HORLICK'S MALTED MILK CO., LTD., SLOUGH, BUCKS.

FEBRUARY, 1928.

NEXT MONTH:

Long Instalment of

a Great New

"Bulldog Drummond"

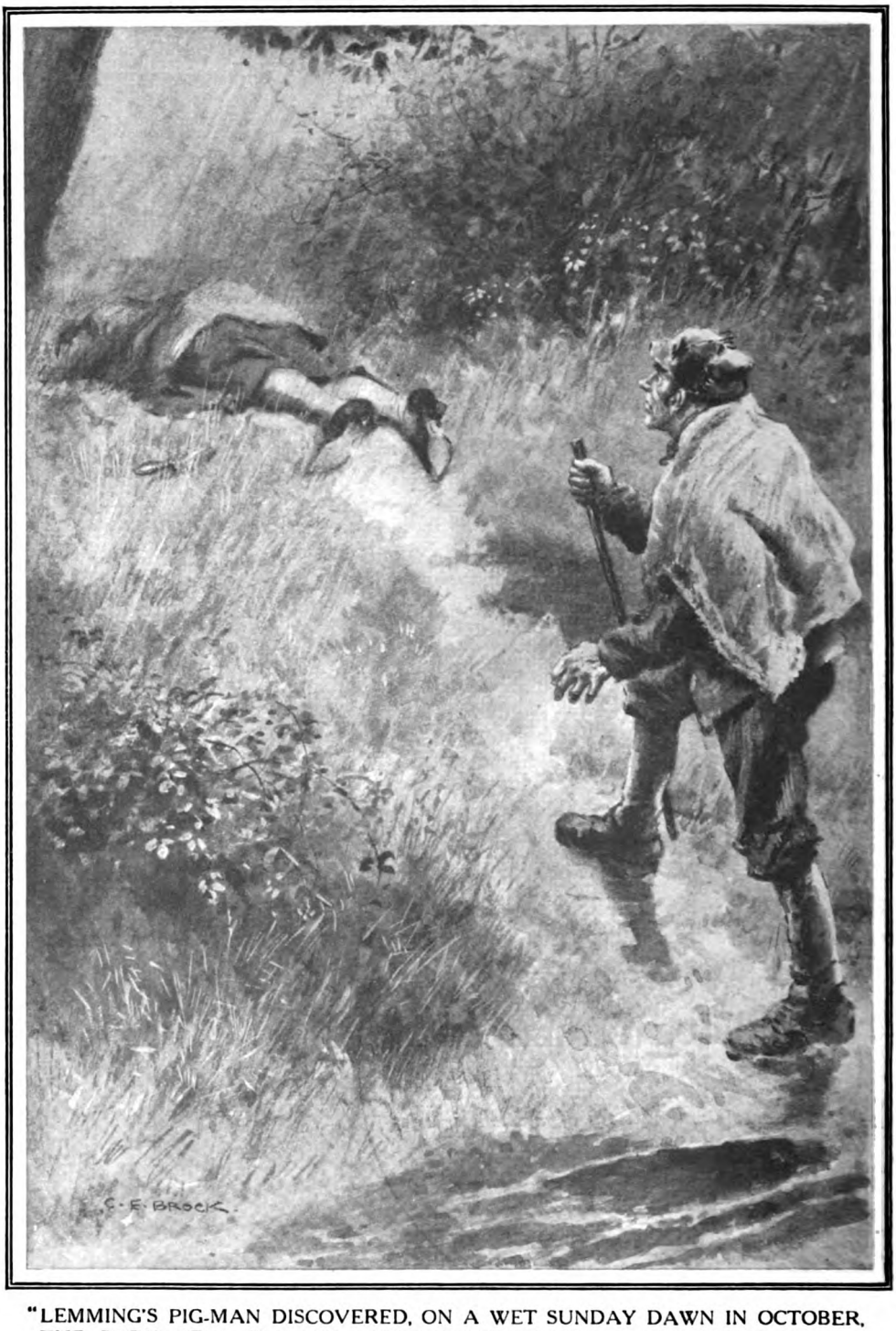
Serial—

The most thrilling story of the whole series

By

H. C. McNEILE

("Sapper")



"LEMMING'S PIG-MAN DISCOVERED, ON A WET SUNDAY DAWN IN OCTOBER, THE BODY OF A VILLAGE GIRL CALLED ELLEN MARSH LYING ON THE BANK OF A DEEP CUTTING."

(See page 108.)

Rudyard Kipling's First Detective Story.

"Fairy Kist"

By

RUDYARD KIPLING

Illustrated by
C. E. BROCK, R.I.

THE only important society in existence to-day is the E.C.F.—the Eclectic *but* Comprehensive Fraternity for the Perpetuation of Gratitude towards Lesser Lights. Its founders were William Lemming, of Lemming and Orton, print-sellers; Alexander Hay McKnight, of Ellis and McKnight, provision-merchants; Robert Keede, M.R.C.P., physician, surgeon, and accoucheur; Lewis Holroyd Burges, tobacconist and cigar-importer—all of the South-Eastern postal districts—and its zealous, hard-working, but unappreciated Secretary. The meetings are usually at Mr. Lemming's little place in Berkshire, where he raises pigs.

I had been out of England for awhile, missing several of our dinners, but was able to attend a summer one with none present except ourselves; several red mullets in paper; a few green peas and ducklings; an arrangement of cockscombs with olives, and capers as large as cherries; strawberries and cream; some 1903 Château la Tour; and that locked cabinet of cigars to which only Burges has the key.

It was at the hour when men most gracefully curvet abroad on their hobbies, and after McKnight had been complaining of systematic pilfering in his three big shops, that Burges told us how an illustrious English astrologer called Lilly had once erected a horoscope to discover the whereabouts of a parcel of stolen fish. The stars led him straight to it and the thief and, incidentally, into a breeze with a lady over "seven Portugal onions," also gone adrift but not included in the periscope. Then, we wondered why detective-story writers so seldom use astrology to help out the local Sherlock Holmes; how many illegitimate children that great original had begotten in magazine form; and so drifted on to murder at large. Keede, whose profession gives him advantages, illustrated the subject.

"I wish I could ever do a decent detective-story," I said at last. "I never get further than the corpse."

"Corpses are foul things," Lemming mused aloud. "I wonder what sort of a corpse I shall make."

"You'll never know," the gentle, silver-haired Burges replied. "You won't even know you're dead till you look in the glass and see there's no reflection. An old woman told me that once at Barnet Horse Fair—and I couldn't have been more than seven at the time."

We were quiet for a few minutes while the Altar of the Lesser Lights, which is also our cigar-lighter, came into use. The single burner atop representing gratitude towards Lesser Lights in general was, of course, lit. Whenever gratitude towards a named Lesser Light is put forward and proven, one or more of the nine burners round the base can be thrown into action by pulling its pretty silver draw-chain.

"What will you do for me," said Keede, puffing, "if I give you an absolutely true detective yarn?"

"If I can make anything of it," I replied, "I'll finish the Millar Gift."

This meant the cataloguing of a mass of Masonic pamphlets, bequeathed by a Brother to Lodge Faith and Works 5836 E.C. —a job which Keede and I, being on the Library Committee, had shirked for months.

"'Promise you won't doctor it if you use it?" said Keede.

"And for goodness' sake don't bring *me* in any more than you can help," said Lemming.

No practitioner ever comprehends another

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practitioner's methods; but the promise was given, the bargain struck; and the tale runs here substantially as it was delivered.

That past autumn, Lemming's pig-man (who had been sitting up with a delicate lady Berkshire) discovered, on a wet Sunday dawn in October, the body of a village girl called Ellen Marsh lying on the bank of a deep cutting where the road from the village runs into the London Road. Ellen, it seemed, had many friends with whom she used to make evening appointments, and Channet's Ash, as the cross-roads were called, from the big ash that overhung them, was one of her well-known trysting-places. The body lay face down at the highest point of a sloping foot-path which the village children had trodden out up the bank, and just where that path turned the corner under Channet's Ash and dropped into the London Road. The pig-man roused the village constable, an ex-soldier called Nicol, who picked up, close to the corpse, a narrow-bladed fern-trowel, its handle wrapped with twine. There were no signs of a struggle, but it had been raining all night. The pig-man then went off to wake up Keede, who was spending the week-end with Lemming. Keede did not disturb his host—Mrs. Lemming being ill at the time—but he and the policeman commandeered a builder's handcart from some half-built shops down the London Road; wheeled the body to the nearest inn—the Cup o' Grapes—pushed a car out of a lock-up; took the shove-halfpenny board from the Oddfellows' Room; and laid the body on it till the regular doctor should arrive.

"He was out," Keede said, "so I made an examination on my own. There was no question of assault. She had been dropped by a most scientific little jab, just at the base of the skull, by someone who knew his anatomy. That was all. Then Nicol, the bobby, asked me if I'd care to walk over with him to Jimmy Tigner's house."

"WHO was Jimmy Tigner?" one of us asked.

"Ellen's latest young man—a believing soul. He was assistant at the local tinsmith's, living with his mother in a cottage down the street. It was seven o'clock then, and not a soul about, of course. Jimmy had to be waked up. He stuck his head out of the window and Nicol stood in the garden among the cabbages—friendly as all sin—and asked him what he'd been doing the night before, because someone had been knockin' Ellen about. Well, there wasn't much doubt what Jimmy'd been up to. He was altogether 'the morning after.' He began dressing and talking out of the window at the same time, and said he'd kill any man who touched Ellen."

"Hadn't the policeman cautioned him?" McKnight demanded.

"What for? They're all friends in this village. Then Jimmy said that, on general principles, Ellen deserved anything she got. He'd done with her. He told us a few details (some girl must have given her away), but the point he kept coming back to was that they had parted in 'high dungeon.' He repeated that a dozen times. Nicol let him run on, and when the boy was quite dressed, he said: 'Well, you may as well come on up-street an' look at her. She don't bear you any malice now.' (Oh, I tell you the War has put an edge on things all round!) Jimmy came down, jumpy as a cat, and, when we were going through the Cup o' Grapes yard, Nicol unlocked the garage and pushed him in. Her face hadn't been covered, either."

"Drastic!" said Burges, shivering.

"It was. Jimmy went off the handle at once; and Nicol kept patting him on the back and saying: '*That's* all right! I'll go bail *you* didn't do it.' Then Jimmy wanted to know why the deuce he'd been dragged into it. Nicol said: 'Oh, that's only what the French call a confrontation. But *you're* all right.' Then Jimmy went for Nicol. So we got him out of the garage and gave him a drink, and took him back to his mother. But at the inquest he accounted for every minute of his time. He'd left Ellen under Channet's Ash, telling her what he thought of her over his shoulder for a quarter of a mile down the lane (that's what 'high dungeon' meant in their language). Luckily, two or three of the girls and his fellow-bloods of the village had heard 'em. After that, he'd gone to the Cup o' Grapes, filled himself up, and told everybody his grievances against Ellen till closing-time. The interestin' thing was that he seemed to be about the only decent boy of the lot."

"Then," Lemming interrupted, "the reporters began looking for clues. They—they behaved like nothing *I've* ever imagined! I was afraid *we'd* be dragged into it. You see, that wretched Ellen had been our scullery-maid a few months before, and—my wife—as ill as she was. . . . But mercifully that didn't come out at the inquest."

"No," Keede went on. "Nicol steered the thing: he's related to Ellen. And by the time Jimmy had broken down and the reporters had got their sensation, it was brought in 'person or persons unknown.'"

"What about the trowel?" said McKnight, who is a notable gardener.

"It was a most vital clue, of course, because it explained the *modus operandi*.

The punch—from the handle, they said—had been delivered through her back hair, with just enough strength to do the job and no more. I couldn't have operated as neatly myself. The Police took the trowel, but they couldn't trace it to anyone, somehow. The main point in the village was that no one who knew her wanted to go into Ellen's character. She was rather popular, you see. Of course, the village was a bit disappointed about Jimmy's getting off; and when he broke down again at her funeral, it revived suspicion. Then the Hunsh poisoning-case happened up in the North; and the reporters had to run off and take charge of it. What did your pig-man say about 'em, Will?"

"Oh, Griffiths said: 'T'was Gawd's Own Mercy those young gen'elmen didn't 'ave 'alf of us 'ung before they left. They were *that* energetic!'"

"They were," said Keede. "That's why I kept back my evidence."

"There was the wife to be considered, too," said Lemming. "She'd never have stood being connected with the thing, even remotely."

"I took it upon myself to act on that belief," Keede replied, gravely. "Well—now for *my* little bit. I'd come down that Saturday night to spend the week-end with Will here; and I couldn't get in till late. It was raining hard, and the car skidded badly. Just as I turned off the London Road into the lane under Channet's Ash, my lights picked up a motor-bike lying against the bank where they found Ellen; and I saw a man bending over a woman up the bank. Naturally one don't interfere with these little things as a rule; but it occurred to me that there might have been a smash. So I called out: 'Anything wrong? Can I help?' The man said: 'No, thanks. We're all right'; or words to that effect, and I went on. *But* the bike's letters happened to be my own initials, and its number was the year I was born in. *I* wasn't likely to forget 'em, you see."

"YOU told the Police?" said McKnight, severely.

"Took 'em into my confidence *at* once, Sandy," Keede replied. "There was a Sergeant, Sydenham way, that I'd been treating for Salonika fever. I told him I was afraid I'd brushed a motor-bike at night coming up into West Wickham, on one of those blind bends up the hill, and I'd be glad to know I hadn't hurt him. There isn't much information the Police can't furnish about motorists. He gave me what I wanted in twenty-four hours. The bike belonged to one Henry Wollin—of independent means—livin' near Mitcham."

"But West Wickham isn't in Berkshire—nor is Mitcham," McKnight began.

"Here's a funny thing," Keede went on, without noticing. "Most men and nearly all women commit murder single-handed; but no man likes to go man-hunting alone. Primitive instinct, I suppose. That's why I lugged Will into the Sherlock Holmes business. You *did* hate it, too!"

"I hadn't recovered from those reporters," said Lemming.

"They were rather energetic! But I persuaded Will that we'd call upon Master Wollin and apologize—as penitent motorists—and we went off to Mitcham in my two-seater. Wollin had a very nice little detached villa down there. The old woman—his housekeeper—who let us in was West Country, talkin' as broad as a pat o' butter. She took us through the hall to Wollin, planting bulbs in his back-garden."

"A wonderful little garden—for that soil," said Lemming, who considers himself an even greater gardener than McKnight, though he keeps two men less.

"He was a big, strong, darkish chap—middle-aged—wide as a bull between the eyes—no beauty, and evidently had been a very sick man. Will and I apologized to him, and he began to lie at once. He said he'd been at West Wickham at the time (on the night of the murder, you know) and he remembered dodging out of the way of a car. He didn't seem pleased that we should have picked up his number so promptly. Seeing we were helping him to establish an alibi he ought to have been, oughtn't he?"

"Ye mean," said McKnight, suddenly enlightened, "that he was committing the murder here in Berkshire on the night that he told *you* he was in West Wickham, which is in Kent."

"Which is in Kent. Thank you. It is. And we went on talking about that West Wickham hill, till he mentioned he'd been in the War, and that gave me *my* chance to talk. And he was an enthusiastic gardener, he said, and that let Will in. It struck us both that he was nervous, in a carneying kind of way that didn't match his build and voice at all. Then we had a drink in his study. Then the fun began. There were four pictures on the wall."

"Prints—prints," Lemming corrected professionally.

"'Same thing, aren't they, Will? Anyhow, *you* got excited enough over them. At first I thought Will was only playing up, but he was genuine."

"So were they," Lemming said. "Sandy, you remember those four 'Apostles' that I sold you last Christmas?"

"I have my counterfoil yet," was the dry answer.

"What sort of prints were they?" Burges demanded.

The moon-like face of Alexander McKnight, who collects prints along certain lines and is, on those lines, a monomaniac, lit with devout rapture. He began checking off on his fingers.

"The firrst," said he, "was the draped one of Ray—the greatest o' them all. Next, yon French print o' Morison when he was with the Duke of Orleans at Blois; third, the Leyden print of Grew in his youth; and, fourth, that wreathed Oxford print o' Hales. The whole Aapostolic succession o' them."

"I never knew Morrison laid out links in France," I said.

"Links! Links! Did ye think those four were gowfers, then?"

"Wasn't old Tom Morrison a great golfer?" I ventured.

McKnight turned on me with utter scorn. "Those prints——" he began. "But ye'd not understand. They were—we'll say they were just pictures o' some garrdeners I happened to be interested in."

This was rude of McKnight, but I forgave him because of the excellence of his imported groceries. Keede went on again.

"After Will had talked the usual buyer's talk, Wollin seemed quite willing to part with 'em; and we arranged we'd call again and complete the deal. Will 'ud do business with a criminal on the drop, o' course. He gave Wollin his card, and we left Wollin carneying and suckin' up to us right up to the front door. We hadn't gone a couple of miles when Will discovered that he'd given Wollin his personal card—*not* his business one—with his private address in Berkshire! The murder about ten days

"My lights picked up a motor-bike lying and I saw a man bending over

against the bank where they found Ellen ; a woman up the bank."

old, and the papers still stinkin' with it ! I think I told you, at the time, you were a fool, Will ? "

" You did. I never saw how I came to make the mistake. These cards are different sizes, too," poor Lemming said.

" No, we were not a success as man-hunters," Keede laughed. " But Will and I had to call again, of course, to settle the sale. That was a week after. And *this* time, of course, Wollin — not being as big a fool as Will—had hopped it, and left no address. The old lady said he was given to going off for weeks at a time in that way. That hung us up; but to do Will justice, which I don't often, he saved the situation by his damned commercial instincts. He said he wanted to look at the prints again. The old lady was agreeable—rather forthcomin' in fact. She let us into the study, had the prints down, and asked if we'd like some tea. While she was getting it and Will was hanging over the prints, thinking how much he could stick Sandy for, I looked round the room. There was a cupboard, half open, full of tools, and on top of 'em a quite new—what did you say it was, Will?—fern-trowel. ' Same pattern as the one that Nicol found by Ellen's head. That gave me a bit of a turn. I'd never done any Sherlockin' outside my own profession. Then the old lady came back and I made up to her. When I was a six-penny doctor at Lambeth, half my great success——"

" Ye can hold that over," McKnight observed. " The murrder's what's interestin' me."

" Wait till your next go of gout. *I'll* interest you, Sandy. Well, she expanded (they all do with me), and, like patients, she wanted advice gratis. So I gave it. Then she began talking about Wollin. She'd been his nurse, I fancy. Anyhow, she'd known him all his life, and she said he was full of virtues and sickness. She said he'd been wounded and gassed and gangrened in the War, and after that—oh, she worked up to it beautifully !—he'd been

practically off his head. She called it 'fairy-kissed.'"

"That's pretty—very pretty," said Burges.

"Meaning he'd been kissed by the fairies?" McKnight inquired.

"It would appear so, Sandy. I'd never heard the word before. 'West Country, I suppose. And she had one of those slow, hypnotic voices, like cream from a jug. Everything she said squared with my own theories up to date. Wollin *was* on the break of life, and, given wounds, gas, and gangrene just at that crisis, why anything—Jack the Ripperism or religious mania—might come uppermost. *I* knew that, and the old lady was as good as telling me it over again, and putting up a defence for him in advance. 'Wonderful bit o' work. Patients' relatives *are* like that sometimes—specially wives."

"Yes, but what about Wollin?" I said.

"Wait a bit. Will and I went away, and we talked over the fern-trowel and so forth, and we both agreed we ought to release our evidence. There, somehow, we stuck. Man-huntin's a dirty job. So we compromised. I knew a fellow in the C.I.D. who thought he had a floating kidney, and we decided to put the matter before him and let him take charge. He had to go North, though, and he wrote he couldn't see us before the Tuesday of next week. This would be three or four weeks after the murder. I came down here again that week-end, to stay with Will, and on Saturday night Will and I went to his study to put the finishing touches to our evidence. I was trying to keep my own theory out of it as much as I could. Yes, if you want to know, Jack the Ripper *was* my notion, and my theory was that my car had frightened the brute off before he could do anything in that line. And *then*, Will's housemaid shot into the study with Nicol after her, and Jimmy Tigner after him!"

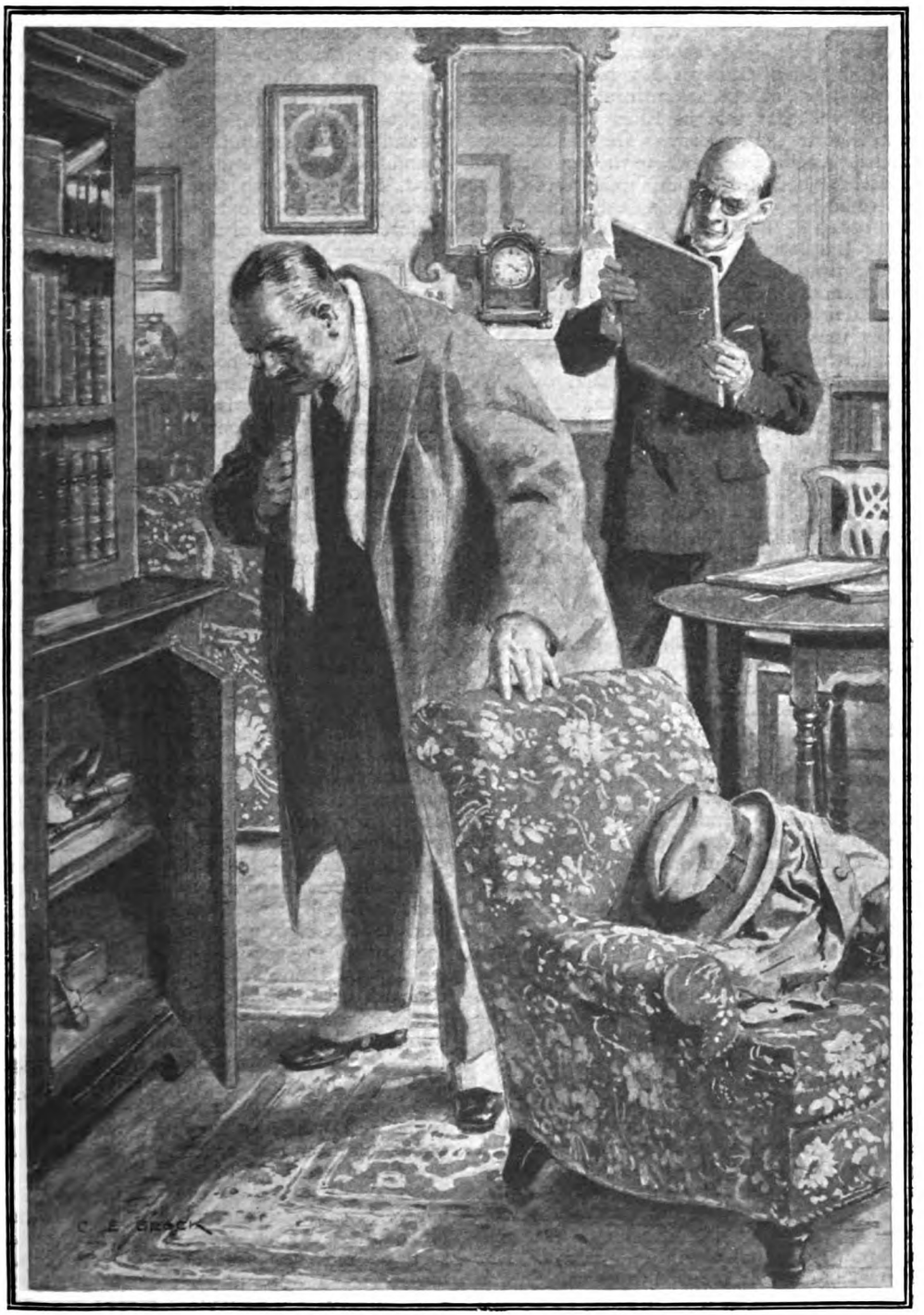
"Luckily, my wife was up in town at the time," said Lemming. "They all shouted at once, too."

"They did!" said Keede. "Nicol shouted loudest, though. He was plastered with mud, waving what was left of his helmet, and Jimmy was in hysterics. Nicol yelled: 'Look at me! Look at this! It's all right! *Look* at me! I've got it!' He *had* got it, too! It came out, when they had quieted down, that he'd been walking with Jimmy in the lane by Channet's Ash. Hearing a lorry behind 'em—you know what a narrow lane it is—they stepped up on to that path on the bank (I told you about it) that the school-children had made. It was a contractor's lorry—Higbee and Norton, a local firm—with two girders for some new shops on the London Road. They were deliverin' late on Saturday evening so's the men could start on Monday. That was a private arrangement, Nicol told us, between the foreman and Higbee's people, because their Union wouldn't allow more than two girders to go up in a week, and the contractors kept the supply down to that. Well, these girders had been chucked in anyhow on to a brick-lorry with a tailboard. Instead of slopin' forward, they cocked up backwards like a pheasant's tail, sticking up high and overhanging. They were tied together with a turn or two of rope at the far ends. Do you see?"

SO far we could see nothing clearly. Keede made it plainer.

"Nicol said he went up the bank first—Jimmy behind him—and after a few steps he found his helmet knocked off. If he'd been a foot higher up the bank, his head 'ud have gone. The lorry had skidded on the tar of the London Road, as it turned into it left-handed—her tail swung to the right, and the girders swinging round with it, just missed braining Nicol up the bank. The lorry was well in the left-hand gutter when he got his breath again. He went for the driver at once. The man said all the lorries always skidded under Channet's Ash when it was wet, because of the camber of the road, and they allowed for it as a regular stunt. And he damned the road authorities, *and* Nicol for being in the light. Then Jimmy Tigner, Nicol told us, caught on to what it meant, and he climbed into the lorry shouting: '*You* killed Ellen!' It was all Nicol could do to prevent him choking the fellow then and there; but Nicol didn't pull him off till Jimmy got it out of the driver that he'd been delivering girders the night Ellen was killed. Of course, he hadn't noticed anything.

"Then Nicol came over to Lemming and me to talk it over. I gave Jimmy a bromide and sent him off to his mother. He wasn't any particular use, except as a witness—and he was no good afterwards. Then Nicol went over the whole thing again several times, to fix it in our minds. Next morning, he and I and Will called on old Higbee before he could get to church. We made him take out the particular lorry implicated; with the same driver and a duplicate load, packed the same way; and demonstrate for us. We kept her stunting half Sunday morning in the rain, and the skid delivered her into the left-hand gutter of the London Road every time she took that corner; and *every* time her tail with the girders swiped along the bank of the lane like a man topping a golf-ball. And when she did that there were half-a-dozen paces—not more—along that school-children's



"There was a cupboard, half open, full of tools, and on top of 'em a quite new fern-trowel."

path, that meant sure death to anyone on it at the time. Nicol was just climbing into the danger-zone when he stepped up, but he was a foot too low; so the girders only brushed through his hair. We got some laths and stuck 'em in along the path (Jimmy Tigner told us Ellen was five foot three) to test our theory. The last lath was as near as could be to where the pig-man had found the body; and that happened to be the extreme end of the lorry's skid. 'See what happened? *We* did. At the end of her skid the lorry's rear-wheels 'ud fetch up every time with a bit of a jar against the bank, and the girders 'ud quiver and lash out a few inches—like a golf-club wigglin'. Ellen must have caught just enough of that final little sideways flick, at the base of her skull, to drop her like a pithed ox. We worked it all out on the last lath. The rope-wrappings on the ends of the damned things saved the skin being broken. Hellish, isn't it? And *then* Jimmy Tigner realized that if she'd gone only two paces further she'd have been round the corner of the bank and safe. Then it came back to him that she'd stopped talkin' 'in dungeon' rather suddenly, and—he hadn't gone back to look! I spent most of the afternoon sitting with him. He'd been tried too high—too high. I had to sign his certificate a few weeks later. No! He won't get better."

We commented according to our natures, and then McKnight said: "But—if so—why did Wollin disappear?"

"That comes next on the Agenda, Worshipful Sir. Brother Lemming has *not* the instincts of the real man-hunter. He felt shy. I had to remind him of the prints before he'd call on Wollin again. We'd allowed our prey ten days to get the news, while the papers were busy explaining Ellen's death, and people were writin' to 'em and sayin' they'd nearly been killed by lorries in the same way in other places, and old Higbee gave Ellen's people a couple of hundred without prejudice (he wanted to get a higher seat in the synagogue—the Squire's pew, I think), and everyone felt that her character had been cleared."

"But Wollin?" McKnight insisted.

"When Will and I went to call on him he'd come home again. I hadn't seen him for—let's see, it must have been going on for a month—but I hardly recognized him. He was burned out—all his wrinkles gashes, and his eyes readjustin' 'emselves after looking into Hell. One gets to know that kind of glare nowadays. But he was immensely relieved to see us. So was the old lady. If he'd been a dog he'd have been wagging his tail from the nose down. That was rather embarrassing, too, because 'twasn't *our* fault we hadn't had him tried for his life. And, while we were talking over the prints he said, quite suddenly: '*I* don't blame you. I'd have believed it against myself on the evidence!' That broke the ice with a brick. He told us that he'd almost stepped on Ellen's body that night—dead and stiffening. Then I'd come round the corner and hailed him, and that panicked him. He jumped on his bike and fled, forgetting the trowel. By the way, he'd picked up the trowel only the night before, on the site of an old demobilization camp near Banstead Downs. Providential for him, wasn't it?

"WHEN Will and I first called on him with our fairy-tales about West Wickham, he had a strong idea he was under observation, and Will's mixing up the cards clinched it. So he disappeared. He went down into his own cellar, he said, and waited there, with his revolver, ready to blow his brains out when the warrant came. What a month! Think of it! A cellar and a candle, a file of gardening papers, and a loaded revolver for company! Then I asked why. He said no jury on earth would have believed his explanation of his movements. 'Look at it from the prosecution's point of view,' he said. 'Here's a middle-aged man with a medical record that 'ud account for any loss of controls—and that might mean Broadmoor—fifty or sixty miles from his home in a rainstorm, on the top of a fifteen foot cutting, at night. He leaves behind him, with the girl's body, the very sort of weapon that might have caused her death. I read about the trowel in the papers. Can't you *see* how the thing 'ud be handled?' he said. I asked him then, what in the world he really *was* doing that had to be covered up by suicide. He said he was planting things. I asked if he meant stolen goods. After the trouble we'd given him, Will and I wouldn't have peached on him, would we?"

"No," said civil and law-abiding Lemming. "His face was enough. It was like——" and he named a picture by an artist called Goya.

"'Stolen goods be damned!' Wollin said to me. 'If you *must* have it, I was planting out plants from my garden.' What did you say to him then, Will?"

"I asked him what the plants were, of course," said Lemming, and turned to McKnight. "They were daffodils and a sort of red honeysuckle and a special loosestrife—a hybrid." McKnight nodded judicially while Lemming talked incomprehensible horticulture for a minute or two.

"Gardening isn't my line," Keede broke in, "but Will's questions acted on Master

Wollin like a charm. He dropped his suicide-talk and began on gardening. After that it was Will's operation. I hadn't a look in for ten minutes. Then I said: 'What's there to make a fuss about in all this?' Then he turned away from Will and spoke to me, carneying again—like patients do. He began with his medical record—one shrapnel peppering; and one gassing, with gangrene. He had put in about fourteen months in various hospitals, and he was full of medical talkee-talkee. Just like *you*, Sandy, when you've been seeing your damned specialists. *And* he'd been doped for pain and pinched nerves till the wonder was he'd ever got straight again. He told us that the only thing that had helped him through the War was his love of gardening. He'd been mad keen on it all his life—and, even in the worst of the Somme, he used to get comfort out of plants and botany, and that sort of stuff. *I* never did. Well, I saw he was speaking the truth; but next minute he began to hedge. I noticed it and said something, and then he sweated in rivers. He hadn't turned a hair over his proposed suicide, but now he sweated till he had to wipe it off his forehead.

'THEN I told him that I was something else besides a medico, and Will was too, if that 'ud make things easier for him. *And* it did! From then on, he told the tale on the Square, in grave distress you know. At his last hospital—where he had the gangrene—he'd been particularly doped, and he fancied that that was where his mind had gone. He told me that he was insane, and had been for more than a year. I asked him not to start on his theories till he'd finished with his symptoms. (You patients are all the same.) He said there were Gotha raids round his hospital which used to upset the wards. And there was a V.A.D.—she must have been something of a woman, too—who used to read to him and tell him stories to keep him quiet. He liked 'em because, as far as he remembered, they were all about gardening. *But*, when he grew better, he began to hear Voices—little whispers at first, growing louder and ending in regular uproars—ordering him to do certain things. He used to lie there shaking with horror, because he funked going mad. He wanted to live and be happy again, in his garden.

"When he was discharged, he said, he left hospital with a whole Army Corps shouting into his ears; and the sum and substance of their orders was that he must go out and plant roots and things at large, up and down the countryside. Naturally, he suffered a bit, but, after a while, he went back to his house at Mitcham and obeyed orders, because, he said, as long as he was carrying 'em out the Voices stopped. If he knocked off even for a week, he said, they helled him on again. Being a methodical bird, he bought a motor-bike and a basket lined with oil-cloth, and he used to skirmish out, planting his silly stuff by the wayside, and in coppices and on commons. He'd spy out likely spots by day, and attend to 'em after dark. He was working round Channet's Ash that night, and he'd come out of the meadow and down the school-children's path, right on to Ellen's body. Which upset him. I wasn't worryin' about Ellen, for the moment. I headed him back to his own symptoms. The devil of it was that, left to himself, there was nothing he'd have liked better—he said—than this planting job; but the Voices ordering him to do it scared the soul out of him. Then I asked him if the Voices had worried him much when he was in his cellar with his revolver. He said, comin' to think of it, that they had not; and I reminded him that there was very little seasickness in the boats when submarines were round."

"You've forgotten," said Lemming, "that he stopped fawning as soon as he found out we were on the Square."

"He did so," Keede assented. "And he insisted on us staying to supper, so's he could tell his symptoms properly. 'Might have been you again, Sandy. The old lady backed him up. *She* was clinging to us, too, as though we'd done her a favour. And Wollin told us that if he'd been in the dock, he *knew* he'd have come out with his tale of his Voices and night-plantings, just like the Ancient Mariner; and that would have sent him to Broadmoor. It was Broadmoor, not hanging, that he funked. And so he went on and on about his Voices, and I cross-examined. He said they used to begin with noises in his head like rotten walnuts being smashed; but he fancied that must have been due to the bombs in the raids. I reminded him again that I didn't want his theories. The Voices were sometimes like his V.A.D.'s, but louder, and they were all mixed up with horrible dope-dreams. For instance, he said, there was a smiling dog that ran after him and licked his face, and the dog had something to do with being able to read books, and that gave him the notion, as he lay abed in hospital, that he had water on the brain, and that that 'ud prevent him from root-gatherin' an' obeying his orders."

"He used the words 'root-gathering.' It's an unusual combination—nowadays," said Lemming, suddenly. "That made me first take notice, Sandy."

Keede held up his hand. "No, you don't, Will! I'll tell this tale much better than you. Well, then Will cut in and asked

Wollin if he could remember exactly what sort of stuff his V.A.D. had read to him during the raids. He couldn't; except that it was all about gardening, and it made him feel as if he was in Paradise. Yes, Sandy, he used the word 'Paradise.' Then Will asked him if he could give us the precise wording of his orders to plant things. He couldn't do that either. Then Will said, like a barrister: 'I put it to you, sir, that the Voices ordered you to plant things by the wayside *for such as have no gardens.*' And Will went over it slowly twice. 'My God!' said Wollin. 'That's the *ipsissima verba.*' 'Good,' said Will. 'Now for your dog. I put it to you that the smiling dog was really a secret friend of yours. What was his colour?' 'Dunno,' said Wollin. 'It was yellow,' says Will. 'A big yellow bull-terrier.' Wollin thought a bit and agreed. 'When he ran after you,' says Will, 'did you ever hear anyone trying to call him off, in a very loud voice?' 'Sometimes,' said Wollin. 'Better still,' says Will. 'Now, I put it to you that that yellow bull-terrier came into a library with a Scotch gardener who said it was a great privilege to be able to consult botanical books.' Wollin thought a bit, and then he said that those were some of the exact words that were mixed up with his Voices and his trouble about not being able to read. I sha'n't forget his face when he said it, either. My word, he sweated!"

Here Sandy McKnight smiled and nodded across to Lemming, who nodded back as mysteriously as a Freemason or a gardener.

"ALL this time," Keede continued, "Will looked more important than ever I've seen him outside of his shop, and he said to Wollin: 'Now I'll tell you the story, Mr. Wollin, that your V.A.D., or whoever it was, read or told you. Check me where your memory fails, and I'll refresh it.' That's what you said, wasn't it, Will? And Will began to spin him a long nursery-yarn about some children who planted flowers out in a meadow that wasn't theirs, so that such as had no gardens might enjoy 'em; and one of the children called himself an Honest Root-gatherer, and one of 'em had something like water on the brain; and there was an old Squire who owned a smiling yellow bull-terrier that was fond of the children, and he kept his walnuts till they were rotten, and then he smashed 'em all. You ought to have heard Will! He can talk—even when there isn't money in it."

"'*Mary's Meadow!*'" Sandy's hand came down on the table.

"'Quiet!" said Burges, enthralled. "Go on, Robin."

"And Wollin checked it all, with the sweat drying on him—remember, Will?—and he put in his own reminiscences—one about a lilac sunbonnet, I remember."

"Not lilac—marigold. One string of it was canary-colour and one was white." McKnight corrected as though it were a matter of life and death.

"Maybe. And there was a nightingale singing to the Man in the Moon, and an old Herbal—not Gerard's, or I'd have known it—'Paradise' something. Wollin contributed that sort of stuff all the time, with ten years knocked off his shoulders and a voice like a Town Crier. Yes, Sandy, the story *was* called 'Mary's Meadow.' It all came back to him—*viâ* Will."

"And that helped?" I asked.

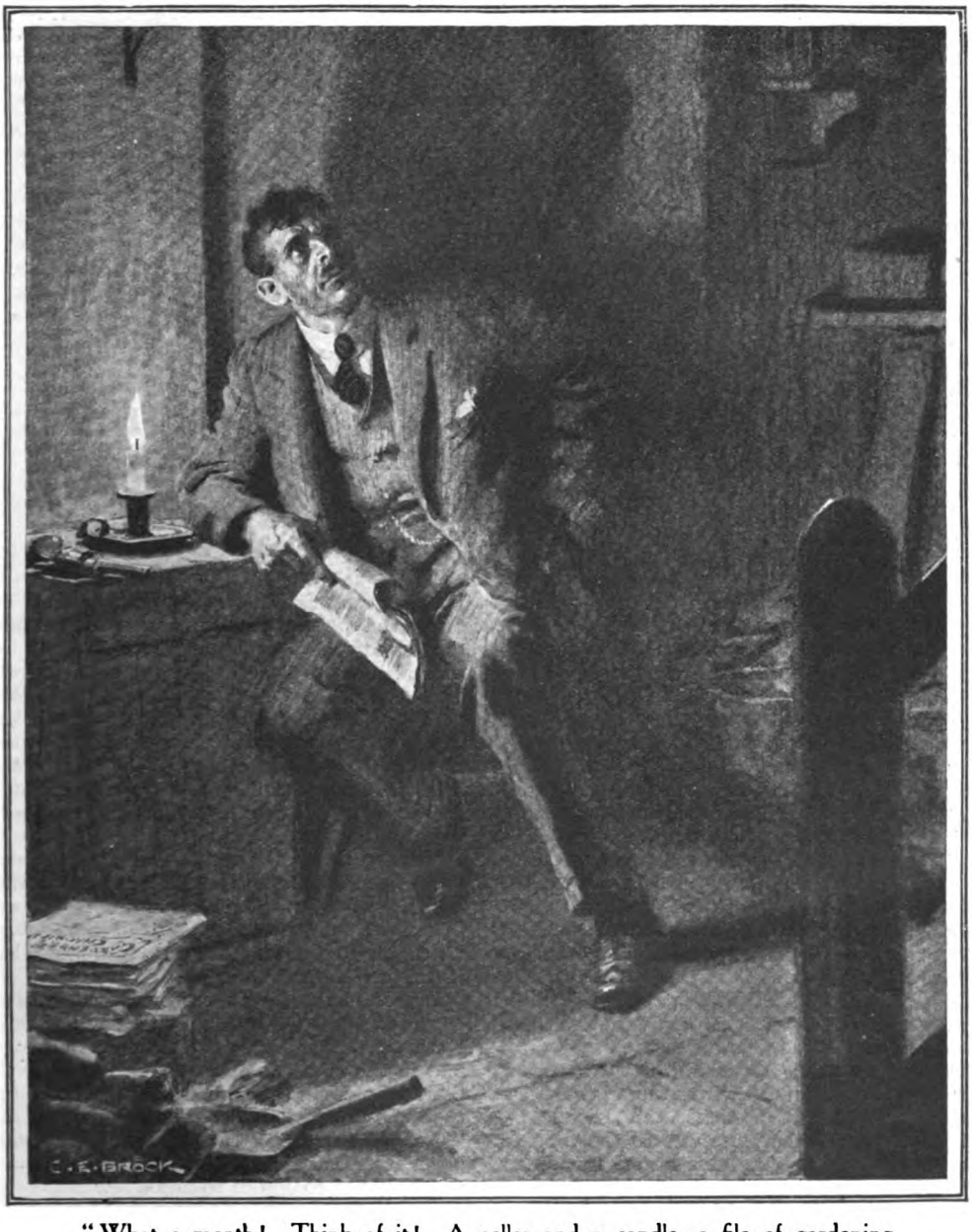
"Well," Keede said, slowly, "a G.P. can't much believe in the remission of sins, can he? But if that's possible I know how a redeemed soul looks. The old lady had pretended to get supper, but she stopped when Will began his yarn and listened all through. Then Wollin put up his hand as though he were hearing his dam' Voices. Then he brushed 'em away and dropped his head on the table and wept. My God, how he wept! And then she kissed him—*and* me. Did she kiss you, Will?"

"She certainly did not," said the scandalized Lemming, who has been completely married for a long while.

"You missed something. She has a seductive old cheek, still. And Wollin wouldn't let us go—hung on to us like a child. So, after supper, we went over the affair in detail, till all hours. The pain and the dope had made that nursery-story stick in one corner of his mind till it took charge—it does sometimes—but all mixed up with bombings and nightmares. As soon as he got the explanation, it evaporated like ether and didn't leave a trace. I sent him to bed full of his own beer, and growing a shade dictatorial. He was a not uncommon cross between a brave bully and an old maid; but a man, right enough, when the pressures were off. The old lady let us out—she didn't kiss me again, worse luck! She was primitive Stone Age—bless her! She looked on us as a couple of magicians who'd broken the spell on him, she said."

"Well, you had," said Burges. "What did he do afterwards?"

"'Bought a side-car to his bike, to hold more vegetables—he'll be had up for poaching or trespassing some day—and he cuts about the Home Counties planting his stuff as happy as—— Oh, my soul! What wouldn't I give to be even one fraction as happy as he is! *But*, mind you, he'd have committed suicide on the nod if Will and I had had him arrested. We aren't exactly first-class Sherlocks."



"What a month! Think of it! A cellar and a candle, a file of gardening papers, and a loaded revolver for company!"

McKnight was grumbling to himself. "Julianna Horratia Ewing," said he. "The best, the kindest, the sweetest, the most eenocent tale ever the soul of a woman gied birth to. I may sell tapioca for a living in the suburbs, but I know *that*. An' as for those prints o' mine"—he turned to me —"they were not garrdeners. They were the Four Great British Botanists, an'—an' —I beg your pardon!"

He pulled the draw-chains of all the nine burners round the Altar of the Lesser Lights before we had time to put it to the vote.

TWINKLETOES and WING FOO

By

Thomas Burke

Illustrated by
E. P. KINSELLA

Come in, any old time,
And make yourself at home ;
Put your feet on the mantelshelf,
Open the cupboard and help yourself.
We don't care if your friends
Have left you all alone ;
Rich or poor, knock at the door,
And make yourself at home.

THAT verse, the chorus of a song addressed by members of the vaudeville world to each other, expresses the spirit of the old music-halls in the days before entertainment became mechanized and standardized ; and the spirit is still to be found in those corners where the music-hall is still to be found. It is a coarse, uncalculating spirit of kindliness that does not, and could not, live in the serene and rarefied air of the film-world. Fellows in those days did not call other fellows Brother : in their random generosity they seldom got farther than friendship. Much credit is therefore due to those noble minds among us who have tamed this spirit into organized Rotary. One sees, gratefully, that though the world moves but slowly towards the highest, it does move.

Twinkletoes, the dancing-star of Limehouse, living in the benighted streets of Chinatown, had not heard of Rotary ; but she had heard the chorus of that song, and it expressed her own benighted attitude to life. She was always generous before she was just. She always saved the drowning man before asking why he hadn't taken swimming lessons ; always filled up the hungry man's form before asking him to fill up the Society's form A.Z. 109,623. It is people of this sort who get in the way of organized love, and destroy all its scientific documentation of human distress by treating the distressful as God's creatures. Sometimes they destroy other work, too, as Twinkletoes did in the matter of Markie Roseleaf's effort at uplifting British films. She tried to carry the spirit of that song into the austere cloisters of the studio, and thereby, and logically, brought the enterprise to disaster.

Markie Roseleaf's film (which you have never seen, because it lies in bondage at the bottom of Markie's safe, and no Prince Charming has yet been bold enough to sever its bonds and release it), this film—but let us begin with its making.

It was when the cinematograph had first captured the back-street public that Markie Roseleaf decided that it was a good thing, and in the same moment decided that anybody who could see a good thing and not go to it was unworthy to count sixpences in the "Quayside Hall." In that moment was born Roseleaf Films, Ltd., and there was then nothing to do but to find a few plungers with a little money, and then make the film and sell it. The latter part looked like walking down the street ; it was the promotion of the company that meant work. Plungers were plentiful, but money—— Markie sat back to think about it. He reached for a cigar, and thought and smoked so hard that he did not know that he had taken a cigar from the box kept for agents.

But after a fortnight of wasted thought and wasted telephoning and wasted interviews, the company was formed, with a capital of two hundred and fifty pounds,

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in five shares. The shareholders were Markie; Leonino Levi, the "Quayside" conductor; old Minasi (father of Twinkletoes, who came in on a promise of a part for Twinkletoes); Danny MacVeagh, the comedian, who was making and saving money; and Eddie Emberson, Markie's assistant. In the first week the five potential millionaires met frequently. After the first week Markie told them that a better film would be made if one director did the directing; and, anyway, he had had complaints from the public-house next door that its customers who had put pennies in the automatic piano wanted them back, believing that it wasn't working. Four hours later, when he had disposed of them, he voted himself producer and director, and Emberson

The five potential millionaires.

scenario-writer, with no power to adopt, or even consider, suggestions from the unsleeping partners. He gave instructions to the sleek-haired Emberson. "Now we got rid o' them, we can go straight ahead. All you got to do is knock out an idea—have it ready by eleven to-morrow—and I'll pick up a camera-man, and the rest of the fixings. We got Danny and the Rochefoucauld girl and the Twinkletoes kid. If we want any more we can pick 'em up as we go. Miss Minnett can knock out the costumes for us."

"I see. Well, I think I'll take a walk. This film game seems more like a boxing-match than anything—all knocking out and picking up. I may pick up a few ideas in the street, if the garbage man's left any lying about. And while I'm gone you might be knocking out a studio or two. Be careful with the capital, though. Don't go knocking that out. Or picking it up, either."

"Ah-sha, get on with it. Keep yer funny stuff fer vaudeville agents. Films ain't vaudeville; they're serious business. Eleven o'clock t'morrow; did ye hear me, or ain't it?"

The scenario was not ready by eleven o'clock to-morrow, nor by many morrows. But long after Roseleaf had grown tired of inventing names for young Emberson's brain, it was delivered, and Markie decided that the wait had been worth while. It looked like being a winner. It was a *tutti-frutti* of the world's entertainment. It was the back-numbers of the comic Supplement.

It was the penny novelette. It was *La Vie Parisienne*. It was the *Police Budget*. It was the Divorce Court. It was the Harlequinade. It was Paul de Kock and H. W. Longfellow and Mother and Home and the Road to Ruin. It was—oh, well, it was a film. You know what I mean. That million-dollar production you saw last night. That kind of thing. A film. Eddie Emberson, knowing nothing about the job, had done it first try, and he was proud of it.

He was proud of it for quite a long time; until, indeed, he had seen the first dozen shots. Then he learnt, as many authors have since learnt, that there's many a slip 'twixt the screen and the script.

It was to be a challenge to America—a real two-hundred-and-fifty-pound world-beater; and, but for Twinkletoes, it might have been. No expenditure of thought and talent was to be spared—to the limit of the company's property in these things; and no stint of money—up to two hundred and fifty pounds. Miss Lulu de la Rochefoucauld, who still preserved, with unceasing labour, the less fleeting charms of twenty-five years ago, was to be leading lady. Twinkletoes was to be her comic foil. Twinkletoes' car ("The Sardine Tin") was to be featured. The conductor of the "Quayside" was to be in it, and the old lady who directed the Keeside Kids, and, generally, anybody who happened to be around. As Twinkletoes said, the film wasn't cast: it was flung. But Roseleaf said that if he couldn't drill that bunch of cod-faced tadpoles into making a film that'd knock the public, he'd—he'd retire from the business.

He did.

Though Miss Rochefoucauld was leading lady, it was Twinkletoes who mapped the route. She had seen some films, and she saw that the business was almost as difficult as it appeared to be. That didn't worry her; she felt strong enough to impose a few useful ideas upon Markie and to prevent him from dropping too ghastly bricks. Nor did the part she was to play worry her. What did worry her was how many of her out-of-a-shop pals could be worked into it. She thought immediately of fifteen of them, and talked to Markie about six of them, until Markie began to share her opinion that the business was not quite so simple as walking down the street.

NEWS of the film began to spread from Limehouse and Poplar to the westward districts where actors wait, and to those obscure suburbs — Camberwell, Loughborough, Mildmay Park—where they sleep. Soon strange figures appeared round the doors of the "Quayside Hall." First they demanded to see Roseleaf. Then they asked to see Emberson. Then they wondered if they could see Miss de la Rochefoucauld or Danny MacVeagh. Then they begged to see—and usually saw—Twinkletoes. She was always glad to see fresh faces, especially faces from the legendary West-end stage. "There's nothing like meeting people," she told her dad; and when he said that he couldn't see how meeting a lot of dud actors could help her on, she merely sniffed and said that she hadn't said that it would help her on; she'd only said that there was nothing like it. To which dad assented.

One by one they came to her. "Oh—er—Miss Minasi—I—er—about this film. I've written twice to Roseleaf, asking for an appointment. For old-man and character parts. Could you see that my letters are laid before him?"

"Laid before him, dear? D'you want him to make a meal off them? I don't know what's happened to your letters, but I can guess. I don't suppose Markie's seen 'em. He's one of those business-like people that file their letters for reference and lose 'em for ever. Not the slightest use writing to him. He's so business-like that he often files 'em before he's read 'em. You better come in with me. Yes, dear, what's your trouble? No; I don't think he's got a part for a well-dressed juvenile. Not while Emberson can run up a tailor's bill."

All this company she dismissed with the standard answer which is found engraved on the hearts of most dead actors: "I'll see what I can do. Keep in touch with me." Only she said it with meaning, and not with the parrot utterance of the agent.

The production of the great film proceeded as the production of all films proceeds. Nobody lost his temper; they all found new, and much worse, ones. Except Twinkletoes; she only found increased impudence. It was a drama; therefore its production was carried on like a farce, as the production of a farce is carried on in an atmosphere of tombstones and despair. Every morning Roseleaf held a commination service in the studio, and every evening he rhapsodized to the world on the wonder that awaited it. The principals would arrive at the studio—a converted Sunday-school hall—and ask: "Where's Markie?" And Twinkletoes would answer: "In his room, writing a new verse to the hymn of hate." In the evening they didn't have to ask. Half Limehouse could hear him.

By means unknown and unperceived Twinkletoes began to take charge of the casting, so that after the first week Roseleaf was turning unconsciously to her for

properties and extras. "We shall want a couple o' waiters for the *café* scene. Now, where could we pick 'em up?"

"I got 'em outside, guv'nor. Perfect waiters. Been waiting ten days to see you. If it hadn't been for me they wouldn't a-waited, and you'd be waiting for your waiters."

"Bring 'em in and let's see 'em. And we want a young chap for that street dust-up, to come in and get Lulu into her car."

"I got him outside. Teddy Shedd the fly-weight's the boy for that."

"Teddy Shedd, of course. Never thought of—I mean, that's the name I was trying to think of. Fetch him along."

Twinkletoes was always glad to see fresh faces, especially faces from the legendary West-end stage.

AT the end of the tenth day Roseleaf stood on the "floor," beaming at her. He rubbed his hands through his black oily curls. "It's going fine. It's going fine. *We'll* show 'em — eh, kid? This is going to be *a* film."

"That's right. The world don't know what we're going to produce at it. Poor world."

"And I'll tell yeh what, kid. You're on a big thing here. This film'll be a Real Start for you. And if you trust yehself to me, and work hard, and make it Go, it'll be the making of yeh. Lulu's rather past it. It won't mean much for her, but you're young, and it's young stuff they want. It's you they'll all be after, and it's you I'm working on. And I hope when you're really There you'll have enough decency to remember who gave you a start."

"You'll give me that all right, guv'nor, if you produce anything that's a success."

Roseleaf gave her a cold eye that was meant to be dignified. "I beg your pardon."

"Granted. But look here, old Rooster. There's one thing this film wants. And I ain't seen any signs of it yet."

"What's that?"

"Strong meat! Bread and milk's all right for the nursery, but we ain't all in long clothes."

"'M. P'r'aps the kid's right. What d'you think, Emberson?"

The author scowled and scratched his ear. "P'r'aps there ain't much tabasco in it, but that was intentional. You got to be careful with films. I didn't give Satan as much of a look-in as he gets with you and me and this kid. But films ain't nothing to do with life, and you got to think of the mixed audience."

"Ah! 'M-m! Sit down, all of yeh. Let me think."

Twinkletoes took long strides to the door. "Reckon we'd better get out. This building ain't made for vibration."

"Sit down, you bl—benighted kid. Sit down."

"Why not let Emberson think? He wrote it. And he don't think as loud as you, or as——"

"Sit down, will yeh? Anyone'd think film-producing was a joke."

"Well, this one——"

"Will yeh sit *down*?"

Twinkletoes sat down and looked at the ceiling. "The late Markie Roseleaf was beloved by all who came in contact with him. His was a bright and sunny disposition."

"Here—Emberson—kill that kid. Then come and let's think out some new stunt. Come across the road."

In the place across the road, Markie leaned his elbows on the counter, and scowled so savagely at the man on the dark side of it, whom he didn't see, that the man retired in alarm to the next compartment. After two minutes he was startled out of that compartment by a crash on the counter and a jingling of glasses. "I got it, boy! I found it! I found just the big blue patch that the film wants. Funny how things escape you. Why, what we want, to put a bit o' mucky stuff in this film, we got right on the doorstep. Staring at us! And you never saw it. Right on the street. Something that nobody but our place has got. Something that's never been used before. Something that'll *make* this film. See?"

Emberson looked round. "Don't see anything special. Show us yer Blue Patch."

Roseleaf leaned to him with the air of one revealing forbidden mysteries. He lifted a finger and whispered one word: "Chinatown!"

Emberson cocked his ear. 'I didn't hear anything."

'Pie-can! Can't yeh see the idea? Have a Chink in the film. Have a bit o' Chinatown in it. It's new. Hardly anybody knows there *is* any Chinks in London. It'll be something new to 'em. Get one o' those boys to play the low-down stuff—creepy-crawly, like. Eh? A Chink in London up against a white man—trying to do him down and get his girl and put it across him. Eh? The mystery—the—er—you know—grim, like. It's something they never seen before. It's something—something they haven't—er—seen before."

"So you said. Well, and how you going to do it?"

"You leave that to me. We'll go back and tell the crowd."

They went back, and Roseleaf made his disclosure. "Now we can go straight ahead. All we got to do is to find a real good horrible creepy Chink. Now how we going to find one that really looks like the old idea of the heathen Chinee—you know—knifey and cut-throaty and strangly? Eh? And how we going to put it to him if we find him?"

Twinkletoes, who was listening idly, jumped up. Here was a chance she couldn't resist; the chance to do an old pal a turn. "I got him, guv'nor. And I can do all the explaining."

Roseleaf swung upon her. "You got him? What yer mean? You got a Chink?"

"'M. Just the one you want."

"Look here, you running an agency—or what? Seem to have half London outside. I s'pose if I was to ask for a giraffe you'd say you'd got one outside."

"I'd have one round in an hour, I'll bet. And quicker than that if I promised him a good look at you. Anyway, I got a Chink. A Chink who'll make you sit up and swear to be a good boy first sight you get of him."

"But how d'you come to be mixed up with them sort?"

"Never you mind. I make pals everywhere."

"I know you do. I've seen some of 'em—some you tried to work off on me. Hardly know whether we're producing a film or opening a home for cab-horses."

"Nor do I. But if you want a Chink I'll find you a Chink, and I'll show you how to——"

"Here—who's producing this film?"

"You said you were."

"Then I don't want any *showing*."

Twinkletoes leaned back and affected helpless wonder. "He don't want—oh, my sainted uncle!"

"Listen, you! If I was yer father, I'd——"

"If you were, you'd soon learn not to talk to me like that. But putting serious things on one side, do you want a Chink or not?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll go and find him." She flitted to the door. "Now you can get on with your film producing, and leave all the rest to me. Good night, girls. Don't forget to put the cat out."

NOW, eight years before this, a young lady of seven, not then known as Twinkletoes, used to play in Limehouse Causeway outside the shop-windows of Wing Foo, and in the gutters near by; and sometimes Wing Foo would give her and her friends little offerings of Chinese sweetmeats. There was a morning when they were playing hop-scotch in the middle of the narrow roadway. In West India Dock Road there was a frightened horse. It careered across the road, dragging its splintered cart behind it. It careered into the Causeway. It made a yellow line through the crowd, and broke shop-windows and lamp-posts with the right and left swing of the cart. The other children had scampered into doorways, but Twinkletoes,

on one leg, with head intent upon the scallop-shell which her right foot was edging into the chalked square, heard nothing until the plunging thing was on top of her. She turned to run. She fell.

As she fell, a figure in blue canvas coat dived from a doorway, grabbed her, and came up from the dive on the opposite pavement. There he smoothed her, and, leaving his shop in charge of a friend, carried her home to Three Colt Street.

Thereafter, Twinkletoes was taught to add a word to her bed-time prayer, and to mention the name of Wing Foo; and for some years she did.

But her years of personal mention brought little grace to him. Or else her prayers couldn't struggle out of the pressing mist and smoke of Limehouse.

For to-day Wing Foo had no shop, no home, and no hope. Gambling had ruined his personal estate, and the Big Smoke had ruined his personal appearance and his health. So foul was his condition that even his countrymen shrank from him, and compelled him to hide under arches and in the secret passages of Chinatown, where he seemed to be a fungus growing out of the wall. They only shrank from him; but if by chance he got out to the streets, white women and children ran in sick terror at sight of him. He was anomalous. None could recognize in him the upright and clean Wing Foo who had kept shop in Limehouse Causeway; the steady, prosperous trader. He was down in the dirt, and he was of the dirt.

It was while business was prospering, and he could afford to lose a little money, that he had first turned to the puck-a-poo and fan-tan parlours. The gambling itch spread through his fingers. He grew tired of small bets, and began to plunge, and as he plunged he lost, and as he lost he turned more and more to the pipe for solace; and as his dreams drew him more and more away from his business, so did they loosen his judgment of when to play and when not to play. Slowly his savings went; then his daily shop-takings went; then his credit went; and then, when it was too late for his local Help Society to save him, his shop went. Now he was out on the streets, asking nothing more of the world than a few crumbs of chandu and a pipe to smoke them in.

BUT one child in Chinatown did not run at sight of him, or even shrink from him. If Twinkletoes saw him in his alley, or crawling through the muddy hollows beneath the wharves, she stopped and talked to him. She knew him, and she knew that beneath the foul covering and the raddled skin there was still the Wing Foo who had given her candies. It was of him that she thought when Roseleaf called for a Chink. Not only was he the very type that Roseleaf wanted, but the money he could get for the job would give him many days and nights of smokes, and bring a little bead of light into his catacomb existence.

She hurried round to the works and sought her dad. "I say, old boy, where's Wing Foo hanging out these days? Seen him lately?"

"What you want him for?"

"Got a job for him."

"Job?"

"Ah."

"What earthly good is a job to him? What could he do? Who'd have him?"

"He can do something nobody else can do. I got a job for him in *the* film."

"But he can't hardly move."

"Don't want him to. Want him to sit just as he is and look like himself. Nobody else in the world can do that. I always want to do something for him, and here's a chance. Three quid'd be a fortune to him."

"What's the good of three quid to him? Or three hundred quid? It wouldn't set him up again. He'd only gamble it or smoke it."

"I know he would, and what if he does? Do what he likes with his own money, can't he? Anyway, I wasn't talking of setting him up. All the money in the world couldn't do that now. But he'd get a couple o' dozen jolts out of it. Even one little spot of something means a lot to people as down as him. Only thing you can do for people like that's to give 'em a jag now and then. They get as much fun out of that as out of being set up again. And if I can do that for him——"

"Don't you be in such a hurry doing things for people. Doing kind actions is the easiest way of getting into trouble, and making yehself hated. If yeh want to be popular, never do a thing for anybody. They'll respect yeh then. If yeh do it once, you're expected to do it again. The people yeh do it to will hate yeh, 'cos they're under an obligation to yeh; and other people'll hate yeh, 'cos yeh do it for some people and don't do it for *them*. See?"

"Wise old bird. But it ain't only that I want to help him. *We* want *him*."

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, don't keep arguing, silly. Where can I find him?"

"Well, I saw him yes'day and the day before hanging at the corner of Saigon Yard. I believe that's his new pitch."

"Right. I'll go and dig him out. Then I'll put him on the map of the world."

She shot away from the works towards

West India Dock Road, and in the damp dusk of the October afternoon, twittering with street-lamps and shop-lights, she passed across the road into Gill Street, and so into the even duskier Chinatown. She went slowly down the Causeway, through the lounging seamen and stewards, peering into doorways and into the dim side-door passages that stretched to the backs of the Chinese shops. A few lights burned above shop-doors, but no glimmer came through the shutters, and she was afraid that in this light Wing Foo might melt into his background and be passed unseen.

He was nowhere in the Causeway, nor in Saigon Yard. She went on past the Causeway into Ropemakers' Fields, and so to the river. Here she wandered through alleys that sloped to the black water, where broken stars danced, and along the water-side, looking into likely holes and corners, and calling Wing Foo softly by name. At last, after ten minutes' search, she heard a rustle as of a water-rat, and saw a dark movement against a darker wall. She called "Wing Foo!" The rustle was repeated, and she walked to a patch lighted by a wharf lamp. "Wing Foo—you come with me. I give you smoke. Plenty smoke."

Into the pool of light in which she stood a human crab came crawling. Strips of soiled brown canvas, that once were coat and trousers, drooped from his shoulders. The figure was as wizened as a roasted pea-nut. The skin of his face was yellow parchment stretched taut across the bones. Out of the lustreless grime two amber eyes stared and burned. The neck was thrust forward. Head and body were bent. Tattered black hair hung about his neck and brow, and two bedraggled moustaches fell from his nerveless lips. The hands were little more than bones, with hooks for fingers.

She did not shrink. She went to him and patted him. "Wing Foo—you come with me. Now. Plenty smoke." She pointed up the alley, and moved from the water. He followed her.

HALF an hour later the studio was in turmoil. Roseleaf was dancing and conducting an invisible orchestra. Words tumbled from him in cascades. "Oi-oi. Oh, Emberson, ain't it a winner? Ain't it a cert? Look at it! It's unbelievable. J'ever see anything like it in yer life—eh? Oh, what a film-face! I ain't right, was I? Oh, no. I never am. Look at it—it'd make any film. Even a dud film. He's a film by himself. Oi-oi. What did I tell yeh? Leave it to me, I said." He exhibited Wing Foo as an invention of his own. "Now, listen. He's going to be the film. All those shots we done—'cept the early ones—we'll scrap."

"Here, guv'nor—scrap? Steady on. Think of the expense."

"Expense be blowed! You can't make big things by thinking of expense. I said

"Wing Foo—you come with me. I give you smoke. Plenty smoke."

it. We'll scrap 'em. We'll re-take em, and write this bloke into it. We can't have too much of him. We'll have him all through it like a sort of chorus or *compère*. Like a kind of—er—Fate. He'll be a character—like Punch. Nobody could invent that. Nobody'd ever think out that make-up. Or even copy it. You couldn't make an actor up like that. It's just grown on him. He's Wing Foo—and he's unique. He don't belong to life. He's a goblin—made for the films. Oh, to think I found him before he was spotted by any of the others! Here — you — Twinkles — tell him eleven o'clock t'morrer. Sharp. Don't let him come too near me. He makes me sick to look at him—but, oh, ain't he a beauty? Eh? I told yeh to leave it to me. I'll show y'ow to write a film."

The disgruntled author made a rude noise. "Why waste time showing me? Why not go and do it?"

"I will, too. Ah, when they see that film they'll have to sit up and take notice. Anyone who's followed my career——"

Twinkletoes turned from Wing Foo. "Your what?"

"——followed my career——"

"Your saunter, you mean."

"——followed my career can tell yeh that I know what I want, and I go for it. I been stuck too long in this bally East-end hall. I want recognition. I want West-end notice." His voice rose to a chant. "I want to be recognized by the profession. I want my name to *mean* something. I want the top o' the tree, or nothing."

Twinkletoes stopped him. "Don't shout so much about what you want, or y'might get in a mess."

'Get in a mess?"

"Ah. They might give you what you want, like they did to the bloke who said 'Give me Liberty or give me Death.'"

Roseleaf turned his back on her, and addressed the crowd. "Look at the people I found. I discovered Twinkletoes. I discovered Lulu. I discovered Cutie Cosgrove. I brought Danny MacVeagh back. And now I've found my best thing. I tell you I ain't been twenty years in the profession fer nothing."

Twinkletoes made a face. "Not for much more, I bet, or they wouldn't a-kept you manager so long."

"That's enough o' your sauce. I *made* this hall. The company know what I'm worth to 'em."

"Yes—and if they paid you what you was worth you'd be owing 'em something."

"Oh, go to—go to supper. And bring That along at eleven o'clock t'morrer. Sharp. Now we'll close down."

Half a mo', guv'nor. He wants to know if he can have a quid in advance."

Roseleaf roared. "Wants to know *what?*"

"A quid in advance. He wants a sub."

'He wants—— Oh, does he? Does he? And you come and ask for it—eh? Here—is my tie up the back of me collar?"

"No, guv'nor, you're all right."

"Oh! Well, what is it about me makes me look such a fool? Coming and asking me for a sub. Grr!"

"Well, you want him, and you probably won't get him if you don't sub him."

"No. And I certainly won't get him if I do. If I got to do without him, I'd rather do without him only, than do without him and a good quid as well. Give him a quid, and I'd never see him again. I ain't been twenty years in the profession—— You said he's a smoker and a punter. Well, I know that sort. I've had 'em before. Only way to hold 'em's to give 'em nothing till the job's done Except promises. You tell him eleven o'clock t'morrer. And three quid when the job's done. See?"

"Oh, all right, Reckless. You must a-been born in the Aberdeen quarter of the Ghetto, I reckon. Come on, Wing Foo, you and me get out of here."

NEXT morning, after Roseleaf had put Miss Lulu through a short rehearsal, and added several more verses to the hymn of hate, Twinkletoes came in. Roseleaf barked at her over his shoulder. "Brought yer pal?"

"No, but he's coming along. He wouldn't be, though, if you'd had your way. If it hadn't been for me, you'd a-lost him. He wouldn't come without a quid advance, so I give it him meself."

Roseleaf and Emberson and Miss Lulu and Danny shouted together: "You *what?*"

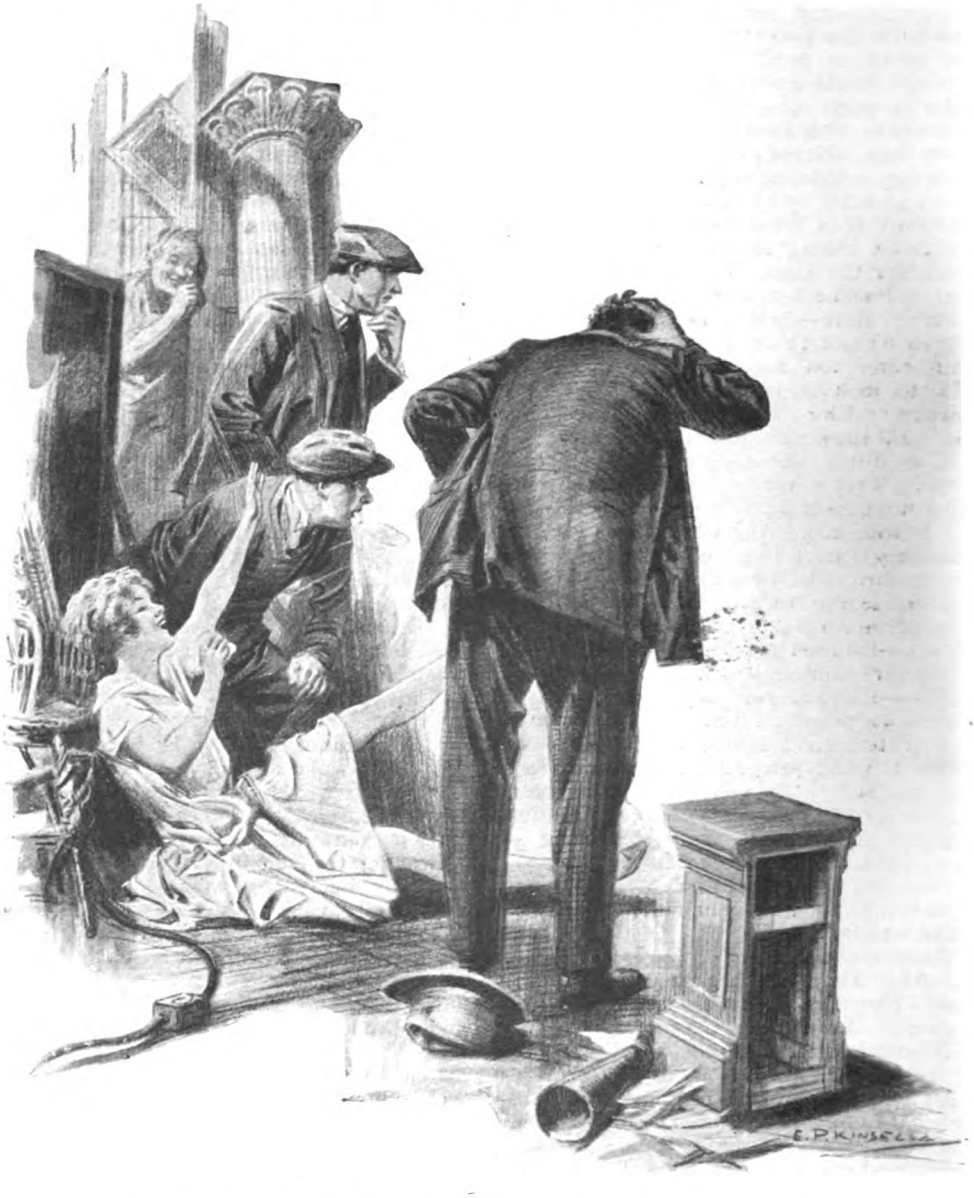
She looked round with innocent eyes. "Give him the quid meself."

'Give him the quid? You gave him a quid? Yeh little *fool!* Yeh—yeh little pie-can. Yeh blinking little benighter!" Three faces bent down to her like clouded suns. "Yeh little fathead. Now yeh been and lost him," said Emberson.

"Yeh been and spoilt everything," said Miss Lulu. "Trusting a bloke like that with a quid."

"Have yeh gone clean mad?" said Danny MacVeagh. "Or doesn't yer father ever tell y'anything?"

"That's torn it," said Markie. "Now he'll go on the smoke or the booze for a week, and we sha'n't ever find him. Even if we do, we're hung up for a week. Yeh little swastika!"



Twinkletoes rolled off the low chair and lay on the floor, kicking.

Twinkletoes gave them one of her looks, but it fell back from them, shattered. They had suffered, in their time, bombardments of looks; they were shell-proof.

"Listen to me, guv'nor. When you've used up all yer names. Wing Foo—I mean—you see—what I mean is——"

Markie exploded. "Help! This ain't a fancy dress ball or a charade. I can't waste time wondering what you mean. Even if there is a prize fer guessing it. If you mean anything, say it. Spit it out."

"I mean—you don't know Wing Foo."

"No, and I don't darn well want to. I only want to *use* him. Anyway, I know gamblers and boozers, and I know down-and-outs. And I know what happens when they see a quid. As long as it lasts we'll never see him here. And he might make it last a week. He might have a bit o' luck

gambling. And when it's gone, he'll have had such a binge he'll have forgotten where he got it or how he got it."

'Oh, no, he won't. He promised me."

Roseleaf tried to tear down the sky. "Promised her! *Promised* her! Oh, listen,

boys, listen! Hark at the priceless intermediate calorific little angel. A doper *promised* you. Did he? Did he really?"

Twinkletoes was calm. "That's not you talking, Markie. That's Satan. Yes, he did promise me. *And* he'll keep his promise. I know him, you see. I know him. I dessay he did have a pipe or two. Probably three or four. And he'll be all the better for it. He'll be able to understand things more easily. I knew what he wanted it for, but it won't do him any harm. He said he'd turn up, and he will turn up, and turn up fit. I know when a feller means what he says. If he hadn't meant to come, he wouldn't a-given his word. Not Wing Foo. And he did give his word. And not even hop'll make him break it. Wing Foo's a gentleman, even if he is down and out. So none of you can judge how he'll behave. Anyway, he wants the rest of that money, so if it's only for his own sake, he'll turn up. Don't you worry, children."

"Oh, no, he won't. He'd have to *work* fer that money, whereas he's got a perfectly good quid fer nothing. And to chaps as down as he is, one quid's the same as ten. I know 'em. I ain't been twenty years in the profession—— You can't trust that kind with a shilling advance. He'll be off on the hop now, and you've ruined the bally film." He turned from her and showed her a black back and rounded shoulders. Over his shoulder he growled: "You and yer dud pals!"

"My pals ain't dud. None of 'em. All those I've brought here have kept their time and been good workers. And I'll bet ten quid *he* will."

"I wouldn't take yer money, even if you'd got as much. Here, come on, Lulu, let's try that exit again. Light 'em up! Now, then!"

During the next half-hour it became clear that news of the film and of the engagement of a Chinese had spread through Chinatown. In ones and twos the Chinks presented themselves for work; some in lounge suits, with a knife-blade crease to the trousers; some in blue dungaree; some in seamen's clothes, and some in an assortment of misfits; and Twinkletoes was kept busy stalling them off. "No. No. Don't want you. Don't want any more. Only want one. We got one. Only one. See?" But each seemed to think that he was the "one" needed, and while she was shooing some out, others came in. All were unwilling to go.

At last all were out but one. Just as she slammed the door on what she thought was the last, she saw the laggard strolling round and inspecting the set. Roseleaf waved his arms at him and talked in a baby-English, which he thought was the correct way to talk to Chinese. "No want. Me no wantee Chinee. Me gettee Chinee me want," until Twinkletoes pushed him away with: "Shut up, y'ole fool. Let me talk to him. Here—you—come on. We ain't engaging a troop. We've got the one we want already booked." Roseleaf took it up. "Yes, that's it. We no wantee. Savee? Vamoose. Levant. Bung off."

But the Chink turned a pale smile on him, and continued to inspect the set. Roseleaf inspected *him*. "Here—Emberson—ever see a turn-out like this? Have a look at it." He pointed to the black bowler hat, with green patches, the shiny lounge suit creased in the wrong places, the brown boots, the white cotton gloves, the turn-down collar, and the college tie of faded colourings. Out of this salad of costume peered a thin face, smooth and shiny. He took off his hat to Roseleaf, and stooped deferentially towards him. As the hat came off it let loose an odour of brilliantine. "Blimey, these Chinks don't half fancy themselves when

they get hold of our clothes—eh? Go on—you get out. You trottee. See?" The Chink ignored all his signals, and walked round the camera and looked into it. Roseleaf turned away. "Oh, come on—let's get on. Leave the damfool alone. Here—you—Twinkles—you get him out. And then go and see if you can find yer pal. Twinkles—here—where is she?"

He turned round twice to look for her. She wasn't where she had been when he had begun to speak. She was sitting on a low chair at the edge of the set, rocking backwards and forwards. Her handkerchief was at her mouth. Her eyes were bulging. Roseleaf registered disturbance. "Here—what's the matter with the kid? What the devil—here—Lulu—have a look at her. She's foaming. Going to have a fit." But as Lulu approached her, she removed the handkerchief and spluttered and choked.

"Darn it, she's laughing. What's the joke? Eh? What's the joke?" Still choking, she stretched a wavering arm in front of her. He followed the direction of the arm. "Can't see anything. What's the game?"

"N-no. N-not there. There!"

"Where?"

"*There!*"

"Damned if I can see what she's pointing at. Keep yer hand still, yeh little fool. Oh, I see. It's that Chink. Well, what's the joke? I know he looks funny, but——"

"I—you—oh, Markie!" She rolled off the low chair and lay on the floor, kicking. Markie stared down at her. He expressed the indignant bewilderment of one who is aware of a joke and aware that he is not in it. He looked from her to the Chink. He had a long look. Then he opened his mouth. The electricians bolted behind the set. "Here—Twinkletoes—here——" the voice dropped to entreaty; almost prayer—"don't—don't tell me that's yer pal—Wing Foo."

Twinkletoes shrieked. "I w-won't if you d-don't—w-want me to. It is, though. Oh, Markie!"

Markie again opened his mouth and pulled in all the air that was about. Then he walked up to the Chink. "You—you—you thunderstruck multiplication table. You—you idiot! You knock-kneed son of a — you — you — er — m-mmm. Here, Emberson! Say something to him. Wotter you gone and done, you Chink, you——?"

Wing Foo stood bowed, tranquil and unabashed. He spoke in soft liquid tones. "Broken down, sir, perhaps, but still know how a gentleman ought to appear before another gentleman. It is best I could do. Cannot do ve'h much with twenty s'illings. But I do my best. Sorry if I do not please."

ROSELEAF looked at him and at Twinkletoes and at Emberson and at the studio. He opened his mouth for a supreme effort; then closed it. There were no words for the situation. Twinkletoes got up from the floor, and came to him with shaking legs and bursting lips. "Anyway, guv'nor, he did his best."

That broke the dam for him. He swung round with arms raised against her. He bent to her, mimicking her voice with a roar. "Oh, he did, did he? He did his best, eh? *And who asked him to, I'd like to know?* Eh?" He stepped back and waited for an answer. There was no answer. He took in more air. "He's ruined the bally film, and we got no more money. It'd take him six months to get all that hair back. And all through you, yeh little ripsnorter. I suppose *you* did yer best, too, looking after yer blinking pals and advancing 'em quids. This idea of doing yer best! I'm sick of it. I seen too much of it. He wasn't asked to do his best. And if ever I catch you or anyone else in the Quayside doing yer best, I'll fire yeh. See? Half the trouble in the world's made by fools getting swelled head and doing their best when they wasn't asked to do anything of the kind. Only to do their ordinary. We don't want pearls for everyday. We want oats. If only fools'd stop doing their best and give us what they *can* do, life'd be a damsight happier for all of us."

Twinkletoes looked for a clear line to the door. She took it. At the door she turned, and gave him one of her twenty-thousand-word smiles. "Quite right, dear. I'm glad you've seen that. We haven't wasted our money after all, as I thought we had."

"How d'you mean?"

"It's cost us fifty quid apiece, but it was worth it. Just to get it into your head that East-end music-hall managers ought to stick to East-end music-hall managing. Don't kick the camera, silly; we can sell that."

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

A New "BULLDOG DRUMMOND" Serial

See back of Frontispiece.

MASTERPIECES OF CHARACTER

S. Van Abbé's Dry-Points

By HERBERT SHAW

READERS of THE STRAND MAGAZINE familiar with the work of Mr. S. Van Abbé as an illustrator will have a special interest in his dry-points of London types, some of which, here reproduced, possess a magic for all lovers of London. The secret of their attraction lies in the sincerity of the artist's successful endeavours to record the characteristics of the types he has chosen.

His subjects, or the like of them, are

"The Bookie."

"The Flower-Seller."

familiar figures to everybody, and lovable figures to most of us. The pictures bring us delight because Mr. Van Abbé's work, at first glance instinct with truthfulness, seems then to assure us that he has also captured the spirit of the people he has portrayed, and captured it without any bothering elaboration or fuss. And we feel that any day in some London street we might have the fortune to meet one of Mr. Van Abbé's figures.

But the artist himself did not meet them without much searching. In some cases they are composite types—the result of pencil sketches gathered over a long period of time, which at length were resolved into the best accordance with the artist's conception. Thus "The Bookie" is not an actual portrait. It combines the characteristics of several types observed by Mr. Van Abbé upon half-a-dozen racecourses. And one of the models for "The Flower-Seller," that study of shrewdness and benevolence, was a charwoman of the artist's acquaintance, who remarked to the artist, "I wonder what my old man will think when he hears I've been a *muddle!*

"People do talk so," she went on to explain. "And my 'usbin's that fussy. What with my daughter 'Melia being a 'ousemaid with Sir Charles C——, I got to be that partikler. You got no idea 'ow she goes on if I 'appens to put a haitch in the wrong place! Ah, well, there's always a somethin'!"

Mr. Van Abbé's admiration of the characters immortalized by Mr. W. W. Jacobs brought him, rightly, to feel that no series of London types would be complete without a representative of the riverside folk who have so often compelled our laughter in Mr. Jacobs's stories.

In this case, after long and happy searching, the artist did succeed in finding an actual model for "The Convivial Bargee"—a wise and jovial fellow who had at one time been a bargee, and was now in business with

a firm of barge builders. His picture is a jolly study of good humour, common sense, and merriment. He proved an ideal model, very fond of holding forth about politics, in which, "though not 'avin' what you might call a lot to conserve," he was a Conservative. Regarding his quiet enjoyment of pipe and beer, it would indeed be hard to imagine him a revolutionary. There is about him a rightful peace—the peace of the day's end, when work is done.

Sketches in the courts—begun when the artist as wserving on a jury—brought, in time, the picture of the counsel, suave and confident and efficient as he makes a point in his case. In this court they were settling matrimonial difficulties, and Mr. Van Abbé heard the story of the boy who asked his father the meaning of the word matrimony. The reply of the father, quoted in court, was an indignant one. "Matrimony isn't a word, my boy—it's a full sentence!"

About "The Fully Licensed Man," which was exhibited in the Academy, there will be varying opinions. The man in command of the bar, looking round his "house," knows to an ounce the financial and social standing of every customer in the place, and the drawing of him is a powerful and arresting piece of work. But there is something a little foreign about him. He is not the fully licensed man of Mr. Charles Pond's famous old monologue of that title, the first hearing of which so fascinated Mr. Van Abbé that for days he had the vision of "Mr. Strard, who kept the Bullock's 'Ead," and could not rest till he had begun work on Mr. Strard's portrayal.

This is no fault of Mr. Van Abbé's, for the age that knew Mr. Strard has gone. Listen to Charles Pond's lovely description of him, delivered by a fervent admirer:—

"Class like Mr. Strard's tells anywhere. Not that there's anything loud about Mr. Strard. 'E carries 'isself well, but

"The Convivial Bargee."

there's nothing particular noticeable, excepting 'is albert guard, which, with the guinea coins, weighs over nine ounces, so I'm told by a working jeweller who ought to know. . . .

"Last Sunday night 'e looked a treat. 'E takes 'is coat off and serves a few 'isself, in a shirt as white as driven snow. But what's a clean shirt to 'im, a man in 'is position; 'e 'as one on nearly every day, I should think. I should bet on four a week. 'E 'as on a neat, narrow tie, yellow and green 'oops, passed through a ring of opals and drawed back sharp under the braces, set off with a diamond collar-stud and two lovely 'arps underneath, with a gold chain of turkises dropping from one 'arp to the other.

"We couldn't expect to 'ave a landlord like 'im for ever. We're going to lose 'im; 'e's going to retire into private. 'E's a perfect gentleman. . . ."

Where would you now find, East or North London, the counterpart of Mr. Strard?

At the L.C.C. school in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, where Mr. Van Abbé studied years ago, an old Manx artist was his mentor, and one of his closest friends. This man, a fellow-student, had a wonderful knowledge of anatomy, and a fine enthusiasm for the work of the old masters. To this old friend Van Abbé acknowledges a great debt.

Time after time, when school was over, he was accustomed to journey home to Herne Hill in this man's company. On their leisurely progress, for the old man was fond of houses of call, he would test Van Abbé's growing knowledge of anatomy, and on scraps of paper every now and then would set down some fresh item from his own great knowledge for young Van Abbé to treasure up. Also, upon these long journeys, Van Abbé would be collecting the characteristics of this and that different type encountered among the old man's friends. And so home to Herne Hill, with more valuable lessons learned, with more sketches

"The Law."

"The Fully Licensed Man."

in one of the notebooks Van Abbé always carries about with him still.

For Van Abbé never stops sketching, wherever he goes. The little pencil sketch of the *chef* at the Beau Rivage well expresses Van Abbé's love for character and the sureness of his observation.

Sometimes he asks his subject to sit for him, sometimes his sketching is swift and surreptitious.

That has its disadvantages. On one occasion an old man, peacefully asleep in an hotel lounge, attracted the artist during a holiday, and he set to work. The subject's wife, noticing this, quickly took a handkerchief from her husband's pocket and covered his head with it. In that hotel, finding himself for once without a sketch-book, Van Abbé, sitting close to the platform at one of the hotel concerts, did a sketch on the jazz drum, and copied it later on.

Everywhere he finds himself, on holiday or through the ordinary working days, Van Abbé has that impulse to make "character notes." Usually executed with a fountain pen or a stylo, they are carefully preserved and, as it were, filed for reference, to be amalgamated in some pictorial composition later on. A huge portfolio in his London studio is crammed with big sheets of paper, upon which have been pasted a hundred or so quick impressions of widely varying types of men and women he has met. For his work of illustration these "notes" are very valuable. Now and then they help to achieve the result of these delightful pictures.

It can fairly be said that Mr. Van Abbé seems to show a greater appreciation of character than any artist since Phil May. Also, an amazing variety is evident in Van Abbé's studies of London types. Even the casual student of character can see that each one of them pictures a type familiar to most of us, and reflects, truthfully and without exaggeration, the man or woman

"The Yeoman of the Guard."

Pencil sketch: "Chef at the Beau Rivage, Wimereux."

Van Abbé has made it his business to portray. That quality of truth, joined with his passion for seizing and recording character, will carry Van Abbé far.

Most of the pictures here given are part of a series of twelve London types. Six of these are already done, and the artist has not yet decided what his remaining subjects are to be. I think he should include a study of a Chelsea pensioner, about whose red coat the charm of history lingers; about his familiar figure, walking very slowly, there is the gentleness of age. In this London gallery, too, there should be a quick and shouting newsboy; and many Londoners would like Mr. Van Abbé to give them a study of a sporting figure—say, one of the helpers in the ring at a big night of the National Sporting Club. And, when Mr. Van Abbé has completed this series, I hope he will search London again to find another representative of the "fully licensed man"—a British type who shall be more rightfully in descent from the famous "Mr. Strard."

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THE LITTLE SISTER

By

JOHN HASTINGS TURNER

Illustrated by
ELIZABETH EARNSHAW

AT the age of thirty-five one realizes that forty is not a great age: that it is, in fact, merely the right and proper time for the beginning of adventure. At fifty one realizes that adventure is a more or less barren pursuit, and one looks upon forty as green immaturity. The compensations of human nature are manifold. So Jane Trent regards Alice Trent as a little sister who knew no better than to air revolutionary follies after tea, but would grow up in time and in the course of nature. Jane was fifty and Alice was forty. Their home lay on the hill above Lyme Regis, where the sweep of the bay runs round to the grey hump of Portland, a long, two-storeyed white house, covered with clematis for an average of five days in the year, until a great wind from the sea blasted away every bloom as if it had been so much thistledown. Over the dining-room fireplace hung a cavalry sword and two undistinguished medals: all that was left of their good-natured stupid sire, who was a major. The medals and the sword shone like quicksilver, for Jane was a creature of loyalty and habit, but the fact that father was a major, so certain once in its social significance, had now become a little dim. During the war, and even after, by some intolerable upheaval in the scheme of things, everyone seemed to have become a major. The local golf professional had become a major. A very nice, brave fellow, no doubt, but—well, I mean! On the whole it was a good thing that mamma had died not long after papa, in the spring of 1914. Jane hardly thought she could have gone on living at the White House with the local golf professional a major. It was a pity that Alice seemed to have no sense of these indecencies. But then, of course, Alice was young—only forty. It was lucky, seeing the unwarrantable rise in the cost of living, that each daughter had been left two thousand pounds by her mother. The interest upon this was all they had, with the pension (absurdly inadequate for the service which poor papa had rendered to the country; he was sometimes as much as a week from home "inspecting," and only his bare expenses paid!)—absurdly inadequate, but it sufficed, with mamma's money, of which one did not talk very much, because it had come originally from the manufacture of waterproof boots, which was a little vulgar. That forty-year-old Alice never seemed to worry about any of these things. What it was to be young, thought Jane.

"Every woman," said Alice, "ought to have at least one adventure in her life." The curate had come to dinner, and, although he was a sensible enough young man, the presence of the clergy always appeared to have a particularly devastating effect of stimulation upon Alice.

"The word 'adventure,'" said the curate, in a slightly oracular tone, "has something about it which suggests the illicit. That is not, of course, what you mean, Miss Alice?"

"Of course it is!" answered Alice, and met her sister's frown squarely.

"The thesis," murmured the curate, "is purely academic."

"Certainly; if you're afraid of it!" laughed the younger sister.

"You must forgive my little sister's nonsense, Mr. Dawe," said Jane.

He bowed and smiled, but, being twenty-seven himself, he found it difficult to regard Alice as the little sister whose nonsense must be forgiven. But Alice, after dinner, would not leave her theme alone. She embroidered

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it in extravagant colours, so that the young man came to the conclusion that there was something rather pitiable in the skittishness of middle-aged ladies, and Jane made up her mind that she must really speak quite severely to the child. This she proceeded to do the moment Mr. Dawe's long figure had disappeared through the low white gate.

"It is not merely," she said, "that it is foolish to say a lot of silly things which you don't mean, but it is not in the best taste, Alice, to make jokes on subjects of that kind. If they are to be discussed—and, for my part, I doubt the wisdom of it—but if they are to be discussed it should be seriously and soberly done."

"Who was joking?" replied Alice.

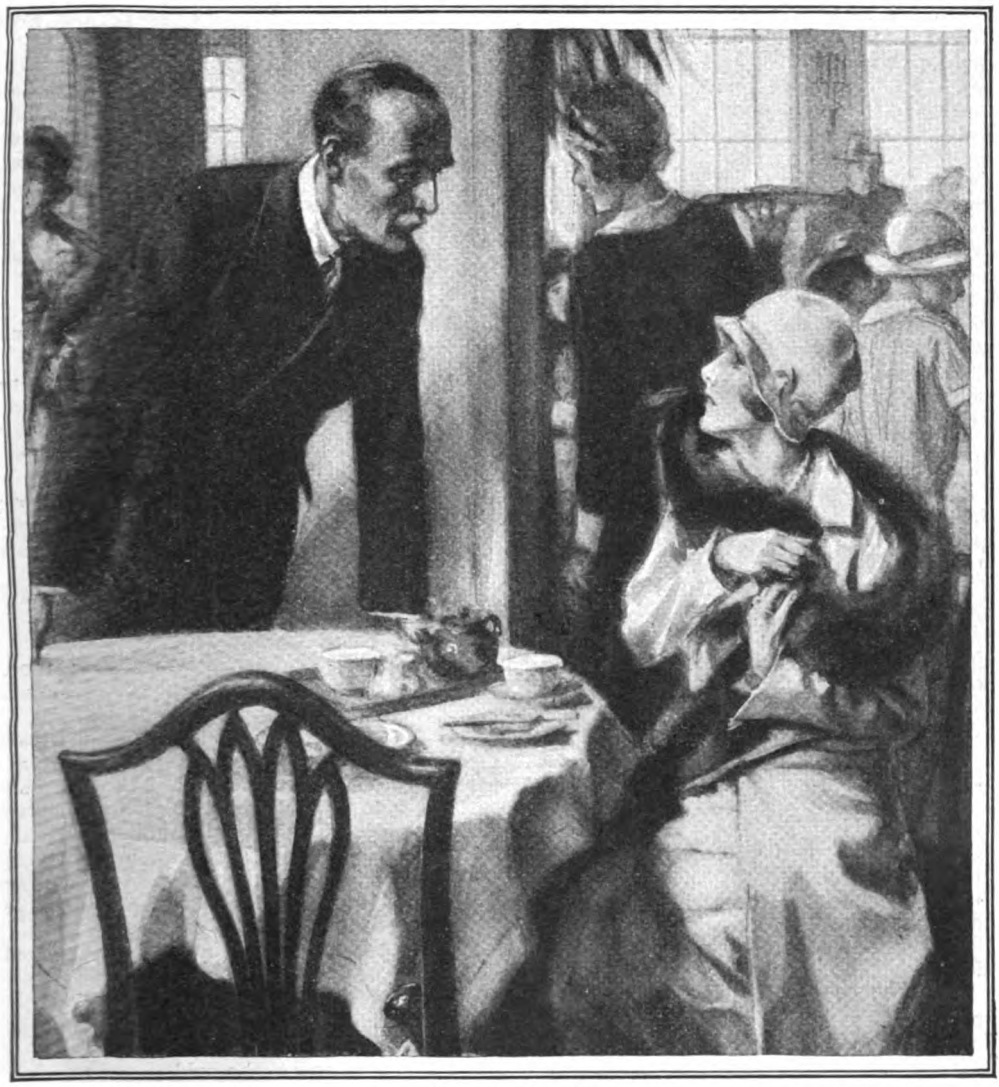
"I should be grieved," answered her sister, "to think that what you have been saying to-night is your serious opinion on the subject." Her eyes, deep with mournful reproach, came to rest upon the shining hilt of the sword over the fireplace. This was a habit of hers when grieved or hurt. A mute reminder that the family was being "let down." It was a gesture which had the effect of driving Alice to yet further extravagances.

They went to bed disgusted with one another, but on the following morning the cloud appeared to have dissipated—as, indeed, it always did. In the garden, in the sun, Alice was not quite sure that she did believe everything she had said, and Jane was quite certain that she couldn't. It was, Jane told herself, those who had never experienced human passions who talked so glibly about them. For her, there had been a moment. She was twenty, and he was twenty-two. But there had been no money, and papa had shaken his head and spoken of imprudence. There were talks, desperate talks, in these very lanes, of flight, of elopement. There, on the crazy bridge, which still spanned the bustling little stream, she said good-bye to him for the last time, and he told her that his heart was broken.

The Major, and all which that implied, had been too strong for her in the end. But the young man with the infant moustache and grey eyes had been her hero for thirty years, and he would always be her hero. Of these secret deeps Alice knew nothing. She had been only ten at the time when they were real, and Jane, accustomed always to treating her as the "baby sister," never thought of telling her the story, which she could not bear to think might be treated with the easy irreverence which she thought to be the attitude of the young towards most things. The passage of time had left Alice untouched by Romance. Hence her airy talk on the subject. Jane schooled herself to look tolerantly upon it, as the professor upon the budding philosopher. She told herself that she was glad that these things, so potent for pain and disaster, were only, for Alice, an opportunity for persiflage. And thinking along these lines, she looked more tenderly than ever upon the "little sister."

ALICE went to Exeter to see their solicitor. It was her turn. Twice a year they paid a visit to the old gentleman who had been the Major's solicitor, and who now looked after their four thousand pounds. It gave them an idea that they were a pair of very business-like ladies—looking into things. They drank a glass of mild sherry with the old man and inquired after their "investments." The investments never altered and there was nothing to say, but the solicitor, with the courtesy of his class, invariably made a great show of interest, and caused whichever of the sisters visited him to feel that the day's work had been strenuous and satisfactory. Alice drank her glass of sherry, answered the old man's inquiries as to the good health of Jane ("Your own," he said, with an old-fashioned bow, "needs no inquiry"), and left the office. On her way to the station she passed the Blue Pavilion, and stopped before its gaudy posters. "Now showing!" roared a giant at her side. A gentleman in evening dress, with fine eyes, was carrying a girl in a night-gown across a telegraph wire from a blazing tenement. (He proved later to be the villain, but what matter?) Alice decided to have one-and-ninepence worth. Then she could have some tea and catch the six-twenty-four. She saw the picture and she had her tea, but she did not catch the six-twenty-four.

In the restaurant a tall man, with thick black eyebrows and a grey moustache, sat at a table opposite her own. She was aware, even before she sat down, that he was taking an unusual interest in her. She was forty, but she was delighted. She realized, as she studied the little card, that he was staring at her steadily. She gave her order and then looked straight at him for the first time. He was unembarrassed, though obviously caught out. His lack of confusion made him even more attractive to Alice than the conventional handsomeness of his face. Evidently a strong, purposeful man. At the same time, she must, of course, appear not to have noticed him at all. This much was due to her own pride—or was it only part of the game? She was undoubtedly behaving very badly; Jane would have been shocked to the depths. She could almost hear her saying: "I simply don't understand you, my dear Alice." Alice was not at all sure that she understood herself. Her heart was beating



"If," he said, in a low voice, "you don't wish me to speak to you, say so."

in a ridiculous manner and she felt, as it were, outside control. It would be, of course, only a momentary phenomenon, a little thrill to treasure later on in the comfortable sameness of the White House. She signalled to the waitress for her bill, and the man opposite to her rose. He crossed straight over to her without hesitation.

"If," he said, in a low voice, "you don't wish me to speak to you, say so."

The bold directness of his attack left her for some moments unable, as it seemed to her, even to think. Obviously she must snub him severely. Obviously she must be affronted and insulted. Obviously this was where her ideas upon adventure became merely academic, as the curate had said. His voice—a very attractive voice—broke in upon her confusion again.

"This is not one of those occasions," he said, "when silence must be taken as a polite negative." Whereupon he sat down beside her, and, the waitress coming up at that moment with her bill, he had paid it before she had actually returned a single word to his original question.

"This is outrageous," she gasped.

He smiled.

"Not really," he said; "not to sensible people."

"Do I look that sort of woman?" she asked defiantly, aware of a faint longing that perhaps she might.

"You look extremely attractive," he answered, easily, "and I am not a very conventional man. To tell you the truth," he went on, "during a life spent all over the world, I have discovered that there are so very few things that one likes, so very few moments when one is thrilled, that to miss any one of them for the sake of convention or for fear of a snub is little short of criminal!"

"You must," she parried, "have achieved a great many snubs."

"Possibly," he smiled. "I have, on the other hand, achieved also a great many thrills!"

It was enchanting to be called a thrill. She basked in it, as under a hot sun.

She found herself smiling to him. Jane, had she known, would have stared the very polish off the sword.

"I ought to call a policeman," said Alice.

"Either that," agreed her companion, "or your husband."

"I haven't got a husband!" she replied.

"Then it must be the policeman," he answered. "Do you mind if I smoke?"

"It doesn't seem to make much difference to you what I mind," she laughed.

He handed her his cigarette-case, but she shook her head.

"No husband," he murmured, "and you don't smoke!" He lighted a cigarette and blew a perfect ring into the air. He watched it disperse and, his eyes still on the smoke, he said, apparently to the atmosphere at large:—

"You know, of course, that you have the most astounding eyes?"

She hadn't known it. The curate had never mentioned it. Jane seemed unaware of the fact. Here was a really nice thing to know, and she had been in ignorance of it all these years. Waste.

"I am not particularly interested in my eyes," she said, stiffly.

He nodded.

"And I see," he answered, "that you don't use powder or a lip-stick. In fact, you are a thoroughly dangerous woman."

A DANGEROUS woman! Alice Trent was a dangerous woman. The mere idea made her feel warm and comfortable. She even considered it possible that perhaps she *was* a dangerous woman.

"Well," she said, evenly, "all acquaintanceships have to come to an end, do they not? I have got to catch the six-twenty-four."

She considered that she was handling the situation like a woman of the world.

"Oh, no," he said, quite gently, but with an air of complete finality.

She looked up at him in amazement. He spoke with certainty, as if, already, he had some kind of claim upon her. His smile, too, seemed to cloak some secret satisfaction, some knowledge hidden from her. Almost, she thought, as if he were having a joke with her, a joke the point of which he would explain to her at his own time.

"Oh, no," he repeated, gently. "We have a great deal to say to one another."

She found herself defeated, banal.

"I must get back to Lyme," she muttered.

"All in good time," he said. The fascination of the man was beyond doubt. It held her in thrall, a human creature without a will of her own. She found herself walking at his side, in the street.

"They are not," he said, "eyes which one can forget." And again she had that impression of a good joke—a surprise which he was hugging to himself.

"I have a car," he was telling her. "You will let me drive you back?"

"To Lyme?" she asked.

"Where else?" he returned, and then, in a tone of mysterious satisfaction, repeated it. "Where else?"

She had not the strength to finish her adventure so soon. She had no fear of him. Some womanish sense told her that his attitude towards her was gentle, even sentimental. Strange, no doubt, after such an introduction, but she knew instinctively that it was so. The car rolled easily along the high, windy road from Exeter. A little smile played round the man's lips.

"Do you believe in cycles?" he asked her.

"What do you mean?" she replied.

"I mean the wheel going full circle," he answered. She shook her head.

"I don't know," she said.

He made no answer, but she imagined she heard him mutter to himself, "I must have changed a great deal." It meant nothing to her, and she had grown to take the mystery of the man's personality for granted. She found him looking at her with deep tenderness, and she turned and looked at the passing hedges. She fought a desire to touch him, a desire to have her hand held in his. The man was compelling. He demanded her love as if—yes, as if it was his right, as if it had already been given to him. The car swung suddenly to the left, down a narrow lane darkened, even on a summer evening, by its overgrown hedgerows.

He stopped suddenly and looked at her.

"I seem to have waited for you, my love, for a thousand years!"

It was like a match struck suddenly

"Jane, darling——" Alice said. "I—I've a great surprise. I—I've brought back my *fiancé*."

within an inch of her eyes. The flame blinded her.

"I love you." She heard herself saying it though his lips were pressed to her own.

"Of course—my darling—of course," he said. And then, as he took the wheel of the car again, he whispered: "Till death us do part!"

She sat beside him, her brain whirling to the hum of the engine. She had met him an hour and a half ago and she loved him, would always love him. It was fantastic. If he were to carry her off at this instant, she would be willing. She did not even blush to think of it. The thing had happened, it was accomplished. It was left to explain to Jane. That would be impossible, but did it matter? He drove with one hand on the wheel; the other covered her own.

She realized suddenly that the car was descending the hill half-way down which stood the White House.

"Yes," she said, "this is the way."

He smiled again—that mysterious secret smile which hinted queerly at some revelation to come.

"Yes," he answered, gravely, "this is the way!" It seemed to her now that it mattered not in the least that he should take her up to the very gate, that they should enter the house together, that they must seem almost to belong together. And yet—it came to her with a shock—he had not even asked her name, nor she his. He was smiling to her again.

"Have you always made friends so easily?" he asked.

"Never in my life," she answered. "And—and it isn't 'friends,' dear!"

He nodded.

"It only proves that it was always right," he answered enigmatically, and then, with a sigh, "What a waste!"

THE car drew up before the low white gate. So much was she one with him that it never entered her head to question how he knew.

"And so—home!" he said, whimsically, as they reached the little green front door.

"But there is someone who will have to know all about it!" she laughed.

He smiled.

"There is always someone, isn't there?" he answered.

They went into the low-ceilinged drawing-room, sweet-scented with the wind from the sea and the flowers in the bowls. The door opened and Jane came in.

"You're very late, my dear," she began, and stopped, seeing the man.

Alice knew that she was blushing and hated herself for it.

"Jane, darling——" she said. "I—I've a great surprise. I—I've brought back my *fiancé*——!"

She looked from one to the other, then took the man's arm in hers. "Oh, my darling—this is my sister. You—you explain things so well—will you?"

She did not wait for his reply. Her face was burning. She felt triumphant and embarrassed at the same moment. She left the room and, running up to her bedroom, cried and sponged away the tears at the same time.

Below, Jane Trent stared at the man to whom she had said good-bye on the little bridge thirty years ago.

"John!" she said.

He passed his hands across his eyes. A gesture half pain and half remembrance.

"The little sister," he whispered. "I remember."

She said nothing.

"It was the eyes," he said; "the eyes are the same!"

She nodded.

"Come into the garden," she asked him. They went out through the narrow French windows.

"You thought," she said, "that it was I?"

"Yes."

"All these years you have cared?"

"Yes."

"We should have been happy, then, if we had run away?"

"Of course we should have been happy."

But he never looked at her. He looked over the rim of the hedge to where, far away, the line of the sea melted into the sky. She turned to him and read his face. Something in her own eyes died.

"And which is it, John, that you love?"

He said nothing for a moment. His face was drawn, his fingers tight locked. Then he drew himself up and looked her square in the eyes.

"The little sister," he said.

She managed a smile.

"You'll be very happy," she answered. "Alice is a darling."

A great lady. Perhaps a very great lady. Quite late that night she was in the dining-room, polishing the sword.

EXPERT EVIDENCE

By

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

MARY RAYNER'S forehead was clouded and a deep shadow had gathered at the back of her eyes. The cloud and the shadow conspired to rob her face of the remnant of its youth.

Now and again she let the cross-stitch square upon which she was at work fall to her knees and, pressing her fingers to her temples, stared into the gloom in the farther end of the room as though seeking an answer to a problem.

Other women, even in her own circle of friends, had been guilty of infidelity as great as hers and had lived it down, forgotten it even. Their temperaments made it possible to do so—their consciences were more elastic, more complaisant. Hers gave her no rest. It throbbed all the time—throbbed and pricked and pointed.

Some of those other women had excuse—provocation, but Mary Rayner knew well enough that nothing could justify what she had done. She was too honest to try to invent excuses—too wise to cheat herself that any comfort would be found by inventing them.

Her husband, through their ten years of married life, had been fair, just, attentive. He had never neglected her, obstructed her ambition, or failed to sympathize with her moods. Of his devotion she had no shadow of doubt. Naturally his work occupied much of his time and thoughts, but of this she had no reason to complain. His work was the source of the good times and comforts she enjoyed. Certainly he was no less amusing than any other man in whose company she could imagine sharing ten years of life. His profession, the law, kept his intellect alive and his enthusiasms alert. By any standard John Rayner was a husband worth keeping and deserving of fair play. And yet she had cheated him.

Trying to trace back the impulses that led her to break down the walls of her private conventions and moral code, Mary Rayner's thoughts came to a dead end. It would have been simple to tell herself that she loved another man better than John. At the time she had believed it, but she was no longer sure. The present reactions of her conscience told her that it couldn't be so. If it were so, she would have had no other choice than to break away and go with him, as she had half promised, to that farm in Rhodesia. But she couldn't break away. Old responsibilities, old obligations, old affections held her back. And that was not all. She wanted above all else to make up to John for the sin against him that he never knew she had committed. She wanted another chance.

Vaguely she wondered how the letter she had written to Howard Fenton would affect him. She had tried to tell him as gently as possible that everything was over between them and to explain why everything must be over. She had ended with "Don't come and see me. Let this be our good-bye." And then for his comfort a lie to say she regretted nothing.

She could afford that lie. He was sailing at noon the following day; as likely as not never to return to England. After all, it was a lie of charity.

With a shiver Mary Rayner picked up the square of cross-stitch and automatically began to work.

The door behind her was ajar and she was unaware that anyone had come into the room until she heard it close with a snap and, turning, saw Howard standing with his

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back against it. Half angry, half surprised, she gave an exclamation and, rising, faced him.

"I asked you not to come—I asked you," she said, and added: "You had my letter?"

"Yes, and burnt it," he replied, huskily. "You can't brush me aside like a handful of crumbs, Mary."

She said:—

"Forcing a way in like this—you shouldn't—shouldn't."

"I've been in and out of this house a longish while now," he answered. "If you want me to send in a card when——"

Mary held up a hand.

"I am not going to quarrel, Howard."

Clumsily he stumbled forward and took her hand in both of his.

"I say—I say—what does it all mean?" he pleaded.

"What I wrote in my letter. It's over."

"But you can't chuck away our life's happiness——" he began.

"That kind of happiness doesn't last when one gets back the power to think."

For the first time he saw the evidence of age that doubt and weariness and regret had smudged in her eyes. Unreasonably it angered him even more than her words.

"Or loses the power to love," he said.

"No," she answered, steadily. "I am as fond of you as ever I was—even if I hate myself rather."

"If anyone had told me you would lose your nerve at the last moment I would have called him a liar."

"I haven't," she said.

"I thought I meant something to you."

"For a while nearly everything, Howard."

"But the rest means more."

She nodded slowly.

"Yes."

THAT affirmative injured his pride like the stab of a knife. It is a hard thing for a man to look on the cold ashes of a passion that once burned for him. "Women are fickle as the climate," he thought, and said aloud: "Perhaps you are afraid to take the risk?"

A wilful wish to wound is one of the first reactions in the mind of a rejected lover. Oddly enough, it made her task easier.

"To avoid this kind of thing being said I asked you not to see me again," she answered.

He gave a short laugh.

"That's so easy, isn't it?"

"Why not? You're going abroad. It's dishonest to try and make tragic figures of ourselves. We don't fit that frame. We're two selfish people who found in each other an escape from—what shall I say?—monotony. There's nothing romantic or pathetic in that picture. In a year you'll be glad I rubbed it out."

He lit a cigarette and moved to the window.

Looking back at what they had been to one another, it was impossible to believe that she had ceased to love him.

"I have done nothing to deserve this," he said. "Where have I failed you, Mary? What's happened to have made you change your mind?"

She told him that that didn't matter, and then that he wouldn't understand.

"No, I don't," he answered, angrily. "It was settled you should follow me abroad."

"I know."

"Then *who* is preventing you?"

"No one but myself—myself," she said. Then, with a sudden intimacy which had been absent from her voice until that moment, "Don't you see, Howard, there's no possible excuse to do such a thing?"

The eyes he turned to hers were blank of understanding.

"I can't take my happiness at the cost of John's."

So that was the explanation. The simplicity and justice of it had never for an instant crossed Howard Fenton's mind. Yet he liked Rayner well enough—and even admired him. His enthusiasm for work, solidarity of purpose, and ability to get things done were qualities deserving the admiration of one man for another. But women are different—they take stock of different human values. Howard could scarcely believe that Mary could give him up for a steady, thoughtful, workaday fellow like Rayner. He could not resist asking since when Rayner had earned so much consideration.

Her reply—"All through our married life"—made him feel a cad.

She repeated it, adding:—

"And I let myself forget it."

"But, Mary——"

"I suppose it never struck you how much John cares for me?"

"I dare say he does—in his way," he admitted, grudgingly, "in his steady-going way."

"Fireworks are not everything," she retorted.

"You thought differently a while ago," he said.

Mary Rayner bit her lip and turned away. In that moment she almost hated him.

"He at least," she answered, "has never once *tried* to hurt me. For that reason, if for no other, he has a right to expect that I should never hurt him, never break down the trust he has in me."

Howard muttered something about love

"I thought I meant something to you."
"For a while nearly everything, Howard."

being the force that rules the destinies of men and women and excuses everything.

"That isn't true—it never can be true," she said.

He began :—

"Isn't it rather late in the day to——"

"No. Until one makes a mistake one doesn't see the ugliness of it."

With every word she spoke Howard felt she was slipping farther and farther away from him. She asked him to believe that he was being cut out because her husband believed in her fidelity and would be injured if he learnt she had deceived him. Who but a woman could conceive an argument or a motive so subtle—so crass! The harm was

done now. Her project of spending a life of atonement in making up to a man for an injury of which he was unconscious was sheer quixotism run mad. Yet, on the strength of this twist of conscience, the husband, who a month ago had been a mere vague figure in an undisturbed background had been dragged out into full light and invested with an importance, an obligation, and a lustre common sense could not justify. And he—Howard—was the one who must pay for this freak of conscience.

While these thoughts surged in his brain, he was only vaguely aware of what Mary was saying. His attentive faculties returned at the sentence :—

" I have realized now that the shabbiest thing we can do is to destroy someone's faith in us."

" What of my faith in you ? " he asked.

" That's not the same," she said, and shook her head. " You know the worst—he doesn't. And he never shall if I can help it."

In spite of the injury to himself, Howard could not resist a certain admiration for her sincerity. It was all rubbish, of course, for there is no real morality in concealment. Yet as he searched her face it seemed to him illumined with a new nobility. She looked—unassailable, immaculate, and so very, very tired. A kindness, foreign to the moment, stole into his voice.

" Mary, you strange woman, what am I to say to you ? "

" Say good-bye," she answered, simply.

" You want me to do that—truly ? "

" With all my heart, please."

For a while he was silent, thinking. Then :—

" Very well—if it is your wish. I love you well enough to grant it." Once more he took her hands. " But listen to me, dear. I'll go, but if at any time you need me——" She shook her head, but he went on : " Please hear what I have to say. If, by any accident, the truth about us leaks out——"

" It never will," she said, swiftly. " Never—never. At least we had the charity to avoid any danger of that."

" One can never tell. But if Rayner does find out you'll come to me ? "

An expression came into her eyes that baffled his understanding.

" No, no, no. That would be the last thing. That would be like building on the hope that he would find out."

" Mary," he said, " you couldn't say that if you weren't fond of me."

" Not fond enough, Howard, to go on being ashamed of myself."

From below came the thud of the front door closing and the sound of John Rayner's approaching footsteps.

HE was sorting over a few letters as he came into the room, one of which was a long, official-looking envelope. Rayner was a lightly-built man of medium height A crop of iron-grey hair, white at the temples, was brushed back untidily from a broad forehead. His features were sharply chiselled, distinct, and intelligent His eyes, which were very bright and steady, were wrinkled at the corners with lines of concentration.

He seemed preoccupied and remote, greeting his wife and Howard with no more than half his consciousness. Dropping a couple of letters in her lap, he turned to the writing-table in search of a paper-knife with which he cut the flap of the long envelope. With that kind of familiarity that has no need to exaggerate its interest, he asked if Howard were stopping to dinner.

" No. He came to say good-bye," said Mary.

John looked up from the pages of closely-written typescript which he had spread upon the table before him. In the pressure of work he had forgotten that Fenton was going abroad so soon. He was genuinely sorry—and said so.

" We shall miss you. Mary, we must run down to Tilbury and see him off."

His attention was drawn back to the typewritten pages and became fixed there, and he did not see Mary shake her head. The report was incredible, unforgivable. Mary was asking him how his case at the Courts had prospered. He struck the table-top with the flat of his hand and stared at the typewritten words. Someone should pay for this—pay the limit, he thought. Then aloud :—

" I'm sorry, dear, only——" The presence of a third person, even a friend he could trust, made explanations impossible for the moment. He answered her question.

" Vera Pullen's divorce, you mean—we lost it."

Mary had wondered why he seemed so absent and distressed, and here was the explanation. Vera was a friend as well as a client.

" That's impossible," she said.

John's manner automatically became legal.

" Nothing is impossible so long as credence is given to the evidence of professional witnesses."

He is starting that hare again, Mary thought, and wished she had never asked the question. John's hatred of private inquiry agents was an obsession. In his opinion their existence was a violation of British justice. Lately he had been almost a bore about it, talking of little else—thinking of nothing else.

He turned to Howard.

" How can reliance be placed on evidence that is inspired and paid for ? Those professional sleuths invent any dam' thing they like. They invest perfectly innocent actions with a false significance to suit the needs of a case. They are utterly without conscience—must be. That kind of business couldn't run a month if conscience controlled it. For a handful of guineas they would swear away anyone's reputation."

With an effort Mary tried to draw him back from the general to the particular.

" Is that what happened with Vera Pullen ? "

John Rayner nodded.

" With the aid of a firm of private inquiry agents that nice husband of hers bolstered up a cross petition. Nothing material, you know, but hints and insinuations of sufficient weight to result in the case against him being quashed."

" A bad show ! " said Howard. " I liked her—a charming woman."

" I am as certain of her innocence as I am of Mary's," John answered.

Mary Rayner picked up her cross-stitch and began to sew. Howard made a restless movement and glanced at his watch. For a second his eyes and Mary's met, and he read a message—" Yes, please go."

John was saying that he would not rest until he had exposed the system of expert evidence to the public—and smashed it.

" And, please God," he added, laying the flat of his hand over the typewritten pages, " I have the weapon here to make that possible."

He picked up the telephone and gave a Mayfair number.

" Is that Kerret and Point ? John Rayner speaking. I have your communication before me. Yes. There are some details I wish to discuss. Get into a taxi and come over. Thank you."

He returned the receiver, and looking up saw Howard standing by his side with an outstretched hand.

" You're off ? I'm sorry to have been such a bore." Over his shoulder he added : " We shall miss this fellow, Mary."

The farewell between Mary and Howard was the briefest, most ordinary affair. Steamer good-byes were too emotional, she said. It was better done here. They barely touched each other's hands, and when John accompanied him to the front door Mary did not even go to the window. Slowly, mechanically, she returned to her chair and picked up her sewing.

She thought :—

" And that's the end of the great mistake of my life."

How easy it had been ! Almost too easy for her conscience. As easy as dying. It was strange that she could find neither happiness nor relief in the easy end of the affair. For the peace of her mind she would rather have confessed everything to John. But it was for the peace of his mind that she could not in fairness do so. Silence was her penance. Silence for always. And they had never had a secret from one another. Looking forward, she saw the whole future as something ugly and distorted—deceitful.

JOHN came back and, sitting at the writing table, read and re-read the typewritten pages. They rustled maddeningly. Mary thanked Heaven her back was toward him and he could not see her face. Instinctively she knew he would start a fresh ride on that hobby horse of his. It was a ghastly subject for this particular day, and she prayed for strength to listen and take her part in the talk naturally—without screaming.

No, she was wrong. His first words were to express a hope that Howard would do well abroad.

" I'm sorry he's leaving us. A nice fellow. I hope I didn't seem off-hand with him ? "

" Of course you didn't," she said.

" That case going wrong upset me more than I care to confess," he said. " It's an ugly thing, Mary, when a good woman gets branded by——"

She said :—

" Don't talk about it, John. Let's go out somewhere—a theatre."

He shook his head.

" I've a man coming to see me. It is a queer coincidence these two things happening on the same day."

" What two things ? " she asked.

" For a long while I've been at work on a scheme to trip up one of these firms of private inquiry agents and put them out of business. The public is pretty thick-headed and thick-skinned, but once let them learn the kind of cattle that the law allows to go into the witness-box and swear away their reputations and there will be an outcry. All that is needed are a few glaring examples." His tone became confidential and he leaned forward over the table. " Mary, I have worked a confidence trick on one of these firms and they've committed themselves hopelessly."

Mary heard herself asking :—

" But how ? "

He held up the letter.

" This is a report signed by James Kerret, of Kerret and Point's Detective Bureau. Oddly enough, they are the firm Pullen employed to shadow his wife. This report records the movements of someone I employed them to watch.'

" For one of your clients ? "

" No, in the interests of society. In making

my choice I had to be absolutely certain of her character. Nowadays women do such stupid things. Harmless enough in themselves, but susceptible to misconstruction."

A vague sensation of numbness gathered about Mary's heart and lungs. The atmosphere in the room had become suddenly cold.

With increasing enthusiasm John's voice beat on and on. He told how, having made his choice, he put himself in touch with Kerret and Point, informed them he had reason to suspect the woman's fidelity to her husband, and instructed them to have her movements shadowed.

His voice rose to a note of mixed indignation and triumph.

"The result is the most villainous tissue of lies I have ever read. Kerret is on his way here now, and when he comes——"

"Who is this woman?" said Mary—and again, "Who is she?"

John Rayner dropped an arm across her shoulders and, stooping, kissed her hair. More sensitive to facts than emotions, he failed to notice how rigid she had become.

"I only know one I can trust like that," he said.

Tonelessly—without a vestige of hope—she asked:—

"Me?"

John nodded. For the first time a vague misgiving assailed his mind that, independent of the motives that had inspired him, what he had done might not find favour with Mary. Doubt prompted him to say:—

"I am so accustomed to your support."

THERE was an appreciable interval before she spoke again.

"How long has this been going on?"

"Five—no, six weeks."

"Six weeks," she repeated, her thoughts travelling in reverse day by day over the only period in her life in which there had been anything to conceal.

Her silence irked him, and with a touch of irritability he asked:—

"You are not angry, are you?"

Mary shook her head, felt his eyes fixed on her searchingly, and, with an effort to appear normal, asked if he could find her scissors.

"Thank you," she said, when he rescued them from the floor. "No, I'm not angry, John—only——"

"What?"

"I thought you trusted me."

Her tone was simple yet reproachful.

"My dear girl," he said, "you could hardly want better proof of my trust."

He feared one of those subtle but hostile nuances which, for some reason best known to themselves, women employ for the purpose of drenching with cold water a man's enthusiasms. Of late she had revealed neurotic tendencies unlike her normal self. Probably she needed a change.

Very distinctly she said:—

"It is dreadful to think you didn't trust me."

"My dear, what rubbish," he answered.

"I mean with your confidence—in telling me what you meant to do."

The words were a relief, and he dropped to the couch beside her with a sense of having been unburdened of a responsibility.

"It was necessary you should appear unconscious."

She made no reply, but, putting out a hand, took the detective's report from him and read it slowly. From the corners of his eyes John watched her, and was surprised to see that the lies it contained induced no emotion whatsoever. Her blank acceptance of these appalling calumnies put him to the necessity of displaying a wrath and indignation which, by reason of the fact that he had set the trap in the precise hope of obtaining some such document, was only partially sincere.

"A scoundrel like that deserves the cat," he said. Then, pointing, "Look there. January the fourteenth. The date you went to Hampshire to stay with your people. He dares to suggest you didn't arrive until the following day."

Mary read on in silence. Howard's name was not mentioned in the terrible indictment.

Presently she folded the pages and gave them back.

"It doesn't leave very much of me, does it?" she said.

"There won't be much left of them when I'm through," he replied, with intense masculinity. "I'll talk to this man Kerret and then I want you to meet him, Mary. After that——"

His vigour awoke in her the consciousness that now if ever something must be done. She rose and moved swiftly to the fireplace.

"John," she said, "I want you to—to let this matter drop."

He gave a half laugh.

"Drop? At this stage? You can't ask——"

"I do ask," she insisted.

Patiently he began to reason with her, explaining how he had looked at all sides of the question."

"All but mine," she interrupted.

"Admitting I might have told you before——"

"If you had I should have prevented you."

"But why—when the interests of justice——"

"It isn't justice to exploit people and deceive them."

"Liars deserve no consideration," he began.

But she gave him no chance to make out a case.

"It doesn't matter if they lied or spoke the truth. You told them you suspected certain things and they gave you the evidence you asked for."

Once started, it was easy, easy to plead her cause. She was not fighting for herself but for him—his future happiness and peace of mind. It was terrible, terrible that he should struggle to effect their destruction.

"Don't you see in their way they served you faithfully—honestly?"

"I never heard such rubbish in all my life," said he. "To defend a pack of scoundrels like that."

"I am defending you—you—from the unfair trick you played."

His expression tightened—became legal—obstinate.

"I have said before, the end justifies the means."

"It doesn't—it can't." Her voice rose to a note of vibrant warning. "You'll be sorry you ever did this thing."

"Justice can't afford to be too nice in its methods," he replied, dryly.

"Even in dealing with my honour," she countered.

"Your honour is above reproach, Mary."

Her head went desperately from side to side.

"How can you talk like that? There isn't a woman alive would stand such an experiment."

John's expression had hardened to indifference.

"It's all so wanting in chivalry," she cried, playing on another string.

"I don't admit that."

"To have my movements shadowed—to ask me to meet dirty little detectives, and defend myself against their charges. To put me in the box to expose their methods! Who will believe you had me shadowed for that reason? Do you think these inquiry agents will run without a fight? You don't admit it is lacking in chivalry to ask me to stand up before the world to have mud thrown at me. It's impossible—impossible to ask such a thing. John, for your own sake, don't go on with it."

As a lawyer of experience, John Rayner was accustomed to the meretricious eloquence of women whose emotions are aroused. He was aware that they have a code which cannot be operated under any existing legal statute. This fact notwithstanding, he was discouraged and disappointed that Mary should deliberately obstruct an action originating in a desire to promote fair play.

In the whole course of their union he had never felt so alienated from her—so out of sympathy. He did not even look in her direction, but sat, chin on breast, wondering how best to answer. He had still said nothing when Laura, the parlourmaid, came in and announced the arrival of Mr. Kerret.

"I'll see him in two minutes," said John. Then, as the maid went out, "I am sorry, Mary, but I can't allow these charges against you to go unanswered. You must please yourself as to whether or not you meet Kerret."

Her reply: "One isn't given a second chance," seemed to ignore the question.

Possibly Laura did not hear her master's instructions or it may have been that her ability to measure time was imperfect, for returning to the hall she asked Mr. Kerret to accompany her to the drawing-room without delay.

MR. KERRET was a bustling, rosy-cheeked individual whose bright and innocent eyes were unclouded by the spectacle of vice which it was his melancholy duty to observe. He appeared to be singularly miscast as an ambassador of the dismal tidings of infidelity, belonging to that class which is revealed at its best on Sunday afternoons pushing a perambulator along the shady byways of suburban parks. The knowledge that gentlemen of his profession are rarely popular with those who employ them or those they are employed against had encouraged Mr. Kerret to adopt affable mannerisms. Thus he was seldom without a smile upon his lips and seldom ceased rubbing his hands.

He was smiling and rubbing his hands when shown into the drawing-room, although both smile and rubbing ceased at the unexpected presence of the lady who had recently occupied so much of his time and attention.

"Oh!" he chirped, "I beg your pardon. I—er——" then, recovering his composure, observed, with the barest excuse, that there was quite a feeling of spring in the air.

Sensations of spring were emphatically absent from the atmosphere in which he found himself. Mr. Rayner offered no word of greeting and Mrs. Rayner did not waste a glance in his direction. Their want of civility was chilling, for even a man whose calling is of an unattractive kind has his susceptibilities. Mr. Kerret felt sadly put down, on which account his usually vigilant eyes failed to observe anything unnatural and mechanical in Mrs. Rayner's movements as she went from the room. He was

"Your honour is above reproach, Mary."

not even conscious of the papery whiteness of her skin. All he noticed was that she stayed for a moment by her writing-table, presumably to put away needlework in a drawer, and that after doing so she went out quickly.

Following her departure there was a poignant silence, in which he had an uncomfortable sensation that Mr. Rayner's eyes were boring holes in him.

He heard himself being instructed to sit down, and obeyed readily. To break the ice he said :—

"It was most unfortunate coming up against one another in the Courts to-day—very regrettable and quite a coincidence.

I'm afraid our evidence was damaging to your client. Still, as I said to Mr. Point, a little incident like that wouldn't prejudice Mr. Rayner against our firm."

John's reply: "It did not affect my opinion one way or the other," carried an inflexion that robbed the phrase of any suggestion of compliment. He added: "I didn't ask you here to discuss that, Kerret."

"No—I quite understand—of course not. This other matter."

"Precisely. It was you who conducted these investigations, was it not?"

"Yes, sir, I am sorry to say. I would

never trust such a delicate matter to a subordinate."

John went on staring at him uncomfortably.

"Then this report is based on your own immediate observations?"

"Entirely. A very regrettable business, if I may say so."

John said: "I agree," with finality.

"The more I see of life, the more it shocks and amazes me," Mr. Kerret went on, blossoming into rhetoric. "Ladies with charming homes—every advantage money can buy——"

"Never mind that," said John. "What I want from you is a statement that this report is an unembroidered record of facts."

Mr. Kerret seemed almost shocked.

"Naturally," he replied, "naturally, Mr. Rayner. Am I not ready to go into the witness-box and swear to that statement?"

"You are?"

"To be sure."

"And what do you intend to do if I go into the box and tell the Court that the whole report is a string of lies?"

The question was so unexpected that Mr. Kerret's rosy mouth opened wide like a child's in wonderment.

"I don't understand," he stammered.

"Let me help you," said John, and stood threateningly over the plump figure in the chair. "I have suspected the methods of you and your kind for a long while, and on that account I set a trap which you have fallen into. That may explain why I engaged you to watch my wife, knowing I could trust her absolutely."

For an appreciable period Mr. Kerret stared at John in angry bewilderment.

"All I can say," he replied, jerkily, "is that it has turned out rather unlucky for you."

He became suddenly aware that John had taken a dog-whip from his pocket and was stretching it between his two hands. Self-protectively Mr. Kerret edged out of the chair and backed towards the door. In a couple of strides John intercepted him.

"Careful now, careful, Mr. Rayner," he

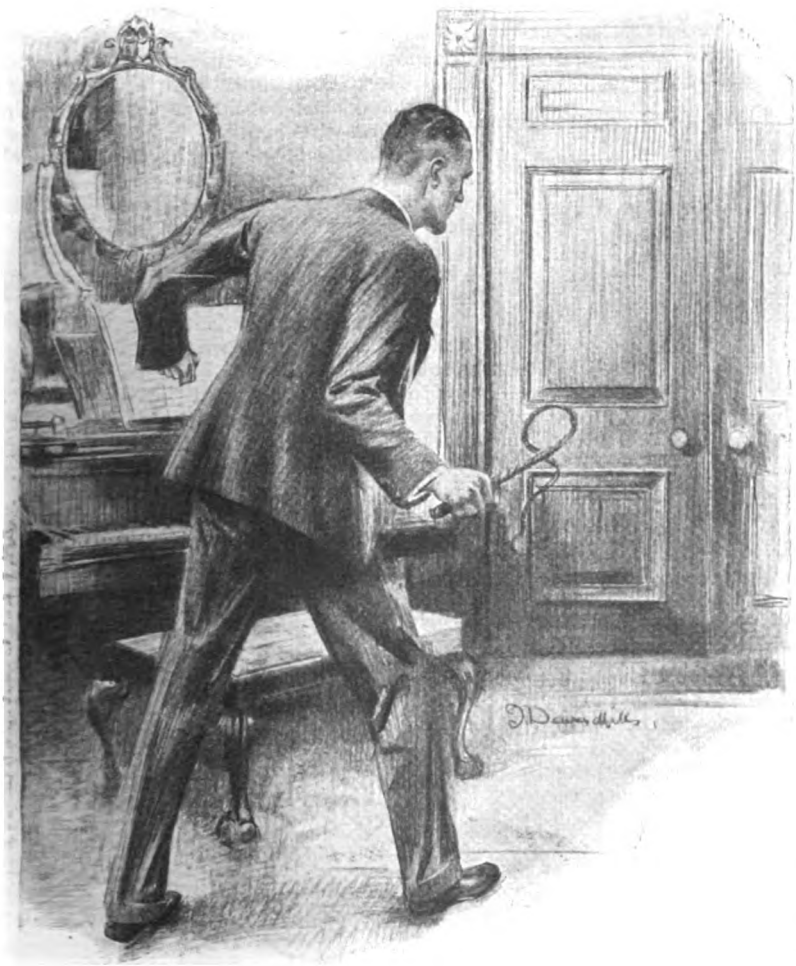
Kerret staggered back against the wall. He heard Rayner cry out "Mary! Mary!" as he plunged at the doors.

besought. "Don't go for to do anything you might regret."

"You can be very sure I sha'n't regret it," was the answer.

"You might—you would. It's not my place to criticize a client's conduct, but mind you don't find yourself where the hunter did who fell into his own trap."

A sudden fury possessed John Rayner.



"You'd dare to try and justify these charges, would you?" he cried, and with a vigour alien to his character one hand fastened in the collar of Kerret's coat while the other jerked up to strike.

Mr. Kerret plunged and wriggled to escape the inevitable.

"I'm not trying to justify anything," he squealed. "I wish to goodness the report was false——"

The hiss of the descending whip synchronized exactly with the crack of a pistol-shot from behind the double doors at the far end of the room.

The grip on his collar was relaxed so that Kerret staggered back against the wall. The pain of the injury he had sustained was lost in a terrified curiosity. He heard Rayner cry out "Mary! Mary!" and saw a dreadful comprehension pass in a wave over his face as he turned, plunged at the doors, tore them open, and went down on his knees beside the dead body of his wife. He saw Mr. Rayner take the body in his arms and rock it as one rocks a child.

Because he was a kind-hearted man Mr. Kerret averted his eyes so that they fell upon the closely-written pages of typescript which it had been his melancholy duty to compile. Moving on tiptoe, he stooped and collected them from the floor and tore them into little squares, which he dropped into the fire. When the last of them had flamed up and crinkled into ash, Mr. Kerret recovered his hat and stole quietly from the room.

ANIMALS IN THE DOCK

By
E. W. D. CUMING

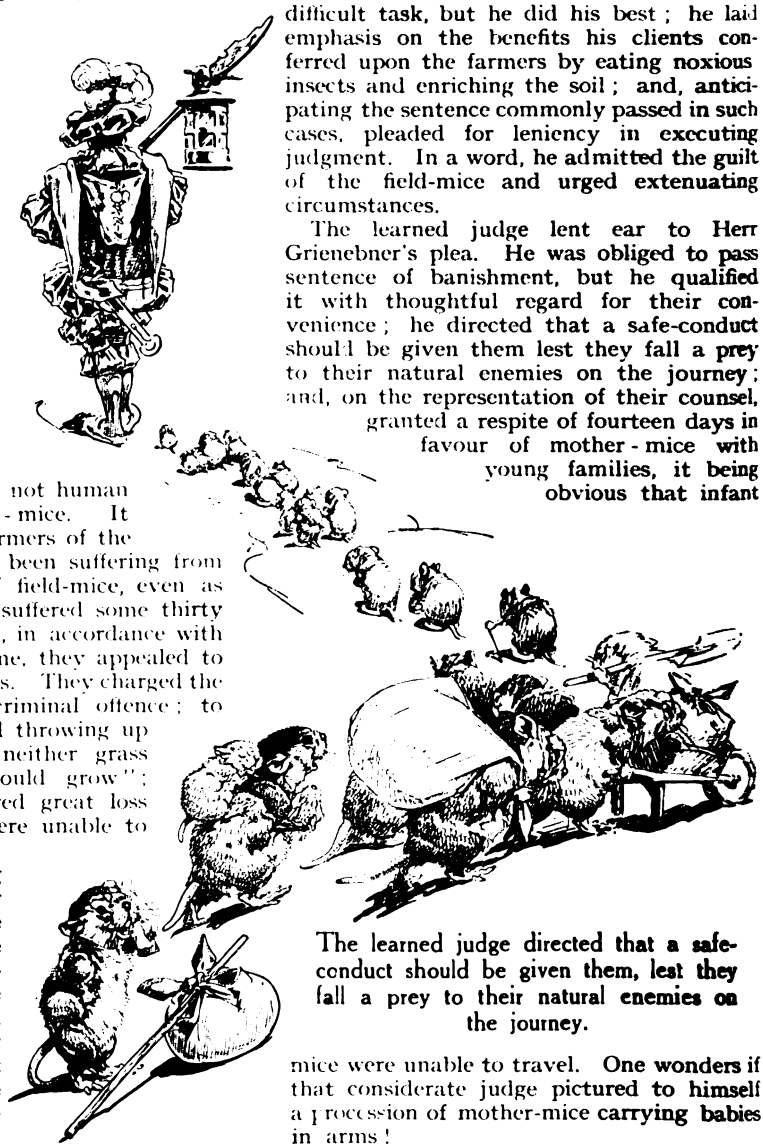
Illustrated by
HARRY ROUNTREE

"TO the end that the said defendants may be able to show cause for their conduct by pleading their exigencies and distress," runs the citation, "and to the end that they may have nothing of which to complain in these proceedings, the procurator Hans Grienebner is appointed for their defence."

This is a passage from a document, dated 1519, preserved among the legal archives of Stelvio in the Western Tyrol. The interesting point about it is that the said defendants were not human offenders but field-mice. It appears that the farmers of the Stelvio district had been suffering from the depredations of field-mice, even as our border counties suffered some thirty odd years ago; and, in accordance with the usage of the time, they appealed to the Courts for redress. They charged the field-mice with a criminal offence; to wit, "burrowing and throwing up the earth so that neither grass nor green thing would grow"; whereby they suffered great loss and damage and were unable to pay their rents.

There was nothing whatever unusual or irregular in the action of those farmers; they followed the course laid down for men who sustained injury at the maw of beast or insect, and the Court took the matter in hand with due gravity, as we see; appointing counsel to care for the interests of the mice. Herr Grienebner had a somewhat difficult task, but he did his best; he laid emphasis on the benefits his clients conferred upon the farmers by eating noxious insects and enriching the soil; and, anticipating the sentence commonly passed in such cases, pleaded for leniency in executing judgment. In a word, he admitted the guilt of the field-mice and urged extenuating circumstances.

The learned judge lent ear to Herr Grienebner's plea. He was obliged to pass sentence of banishment, but he qualified it with thoughtful regard for their convenience; he directed that a safe-conduct should be given them lest they fall a prey to their natural enemies on the journey; and, on the representation of their counsel, granted a respite of fourteen days in favour of mother-mice with young families, it being obvious that infant mice were unable to travel. One wonders if that considerate judge pictured to himself a procession of mother-mice carrying babies in arms!



The learned judge directed that a safe-conduct should be given them, lest they fall a prey to their natural enemies on the journey.

The sentence of banishment passed on such offenders was easy to give but hard to carry out. The legal authorities, however, always had behind them a power very great in the Middle Ages. If the criminals ignored the secular law the Church was invoked; the bishop of the diocese was called in, and he pronounced the anathema, which ought to terrify the recalcitrant vermin into flight.

Ought—but animals and insects being what they are, the anathema was not always effective. There was that case of the beetles which devastated the crops in the Berne district of Switzerland in 1479. It was a famous case, prolonged, thanks to the ingenuity of counsel, for no less than two years. The judge, in the end, sentenced the beetles to banishment in the usual way, and the beetles paid no attention. The Bishop of Lausanne was requested to pronounce the anathema, but counsel for the defence intervened, raising a delicate point: he argued that it would be highly improper to pass an ecclesiastical curse upon creatures which had accompanied Noah into the Ark.

The bishop summoned the ants to appear before his Court.

Counsel for the prosecution countered this with the obvious retort that there was no evidence to show that Noah *did* take beetles into the Ark. This question was regarded as serious; it was argued again and again before the Ecclesiastical Court, and at last the bishop decided that it was permissible for him to anathematize the beetles. He did so in dignified and stately language; but those audacious insects ignored the curse as they had ignored the sentence of the lay Court, continuing as prolific and hungry as before.

In these embarrassing circumstances it behoved the bishop to retreat as gracefully as he could; and he did it by the only route open to him. He declared that the beetles had been sent as a punishment for sins committed by the people, and bade them hope for no relief until they paid their tithes. Comment upon this episcopal decision may be spared.

The anathema, if pronounced at the right time, was effective; that is to say, if the plague were cursed when it had reached its height and Nature was beginning to work her own cure, the credit would be assigned to ecclesiastical authority. Thus it was when the Lake of Geneva was infested by eels early in the fifteenth century. They were so numerous that they tainted the water. Unable to cope with them, the people about the lake appealed to the Bishop of Lausanne, who cursed those eels so successfully that they dwindled away. In sober fact he laid the curse upon them about the time when the eels had increased to such an extent that the lake did not provide sustenance for them; so they died.

Coincidence might serve to confirm faith in the anathema. Such was the case when ants made uninhabitable the monastery of St. Anthony in the province of Piedade no Maranhao in Brazil. This is a comparatively recent instance of the practice, occurring as it did early in the eighteenth century. The ants settled down on the brotherhood, pillaged their larders, injured

the furniture, and at last threatened to undermine the house itself. Things came to such a pass that the friars appealed to the bishop, who summoned the ants to appear before his Court and appointed counsel to defend them as justice required. The counsel made out a good case for his clients; he claimed for them priority of habitation, and branded the friars as trespassers on his clients' own territory; the ants, he affirmed with probable truth, had been in possession long before that monastery was built; and they were entitled to eat anything they found, whether it were beef or chair-legs, to say nothing of garden produce and the like. With some want of tact, as it appears to the disinterested reader, he drew invidious distinctions between the industry of his clients and the indolence of the friars; and possibly this may account for the bishop's decision to give sentence in favour of the latter. It is not quite clear whether he cursed the ants or not; we are told that his "order" was read with due formality before the ant-hills on a day in January, 1713; and what is surprising, the ants obeyed: "They streamed forth in their tens of thousands and marched in columns to the place assigned." Nobody had the hardihood to suggest that the ants would have gone without that episcopal order.

It seems not to have occurred to the sufferers from those ants to try the effect of a frightful example; which would have been quite as effective as an episcopal order, possibly more so. They believed in the efficacy of frightful examples in middle Europe during the sixteenth century. The district between Cologne and Duren being sorely harassed by wolves, the people got them to work and killed a few of the marauders; then, by way of warning to the other wolves, they took two of the slain, put boots on their hind feet, and hanged the carcasses on gallows erected in the forest, as though they had been human robbers, for whom this treatment was usual. Whether the wolves took the lesson to heart and refrained from misdoing thereafter does not appear. We have an echo of this curious practice in our system of hanging up a dead rook to scare away its seed-eating brethren.

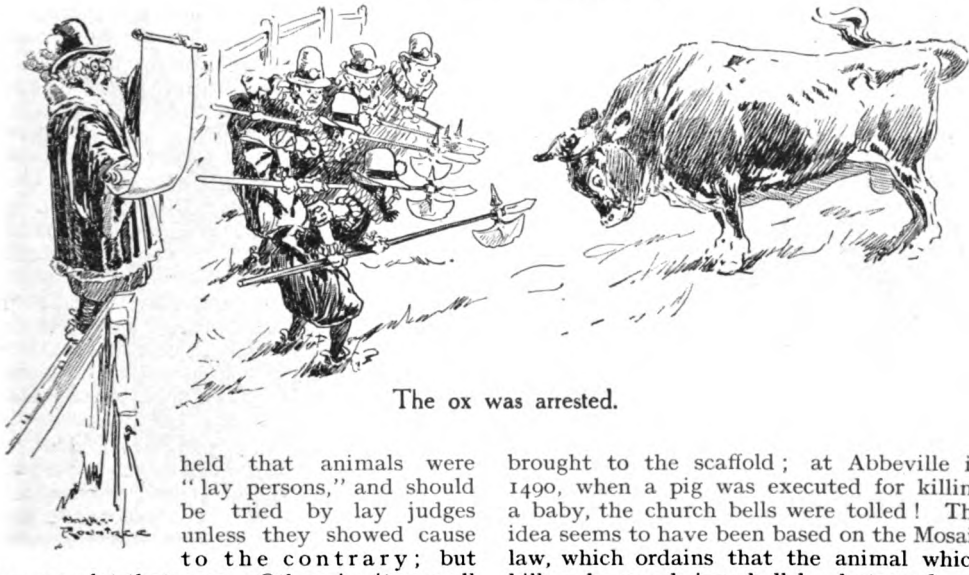
EVERYONE knows the name of St. Julien, famous for its claret. The vineyards of the district were sorely damaged twice during the sixteenth century by the plague of insects, thought, from the description in the records, to have been a species of weevil. The first invasion occurred in 1545, and effort was made to exterminate or drive them away by saying masses and holding religious processions round and among the vineyards. Elaborate details of these ceremonies survive, and also a document signed by the curate, Père Romanet, which testifies that the plague ceased soon after. For forty years the vine-growers had nothing of which to complain; then, in 1587, the weevils appeared again. This time they were brought to trial, found guilty, and condemned to banishment.

The feature of this trial which arrested attention is the care which was taken to provide a suitable habitation for the weevils. A small committee, of which their counsel was one, undertook the duty of inspecting a piece of land selected as the residence of the banished insects; and when it had been approved a deed was drawn up in due form assigning that tract for ever to the weevils for their use and behoof, as the lawyers say. The good people of St. Julien had an eye to their own interests while thus providing for the weevils; they reserved to themselves a right of way through the reserve ("without prejudice to the pasture of the said animals"), and with some foresight inserted a clause retaining all mineral rights.

The place of banishment was remote from the St. Julien district—namely, on Mount Cenis. Being in every way suitable in the eyes of both parties, it was surveyed and mapped and the nature of the vegetation described; nothing then remained but to move the weevils thereto. But an unfortunate difficulty arose. Maître Antoine Filliol, on behalf of the weevils, drew attention to the fact that the troops of the Duke of Savoy, about to invade the territories of the Marquis of Saluzzo, must pass over the Weevil Reserve; it was, he submitted, impossible that his clients should take up their abode on lands which in the immediate future would be trampled, even used as camping ground, by soldiery. On behalf of the weevils he protested. Execution of sentence was postponed in deference to Maître Filliol's representations, and postponed again and again during the passage of the troops; and when the soldiers had at last left the place, he declared that so much damage had been done in their passage that he could not now accept the tract as suitable for his clients' residence.

It is much to be regretted that the documents recording the last of this affair have been destroyed by mice or insects. It would be interesting to know how it was eventually settled.

There was much less scope for the man of law when the criminal was pig, ox, dog, or other large animal. Question might arise whether the four-footed culprit should be tried before a lay or an ecclesiastical judge, but once that point was settled there was no further difficulty. Incidentally it may be remarked that the learned Maître Chassenée



The ox was arrested.

held that animals were "lay persons," and should be tried by lay judges unless they showed cause to the contrary; but we may let that pass. Otherwise it was all plain sailing; the bull, dog, or cat accused of an offence was arrested, lodged in jail, and maintained at the public expense until brought to the bar of justice.

Such a criminal was treated in every respect as though it had been a human being. Mr. E. P. Evans, in his "Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals," says that such offenders were "even put to the rack in order to extort confession." So nice a regard had the legal authorities of the Middle Ages for strict justice (as then understood) that when an unfortunate dog or pig endured the torture without admitting its guilt, a sentence less grave than that of death might be passed—whipping, banishment, or prison.

Pigs frequently appeared as criminals, their crime only too often infanticide. This is easily understood when we remember that until late in the seventeenth century, even in London, pigs roamed the streets performing the office of scavengers.

And as in London and other English towns and villages, so it was on the Continent. Pigs swarmed in the streets; and finding their way into humble dwellings killed or mangled with deplorable frequency infants found sleeping in their cradles.

After tragedy, farce; the pig would be arrested and brought to trial, and, if found guilty, condemned to death and executed with all the ugly formalities attending the execution of a human criminal. Nothing was left undone to foster the idea that the animal was a responsible being. So far was this carried that a pig was sometimes swaddled in the clothing of a man and thus brought to the scaffold; at Abbeville in 1490, when a pig was executed for killing a baby, the church bells were tolled! The idea seems to have been based on the Mosaic law, which ordains that the animal which kills a human being shall be destroyed and its flesh thrown away as unclean. This was read by mediæval law-givers as an injunction to treat an animal in every respect by human standards, and the system was carried to the very apotheosis of the grotesque. Thus, when a pig was found guilty of killing a child at Mortaigne in 1394, it was urged as an aggravation of the offence that the animal "ate of the flesh of the child *although it was Friday*."

It would be difficult to go further than that in the endeavour to place animals on the same level with humanity, but the records show that justice in the Middle Ages was tempered by nothing of common sense. Stay! Here is an example of that invaluable quality breaking through the fog of stupidity. On one occasion at least the parents of a child who had been killed by a pig were arraigned with the animal and charged with what lawyers now call "contributory negligence"; they were fined for omitting to take precautions against such a tragedy as had befallen them; in other words, they had gone out, leaving their baby in its cradle on the floor, and had taken no pains to make fast the door. The circumstance is eloquent of the ever-present danger from swine.

The Law has always been jealous of its authority. Taking the law into one's own hands was as risky a proceeding in old days as it is now. No doubt if a man slew a pig or dog in the act of killing or injuring, nothing would have been said about it; but once an animal had been arrested it became the property of the Law, so to speak, and must be left to be dealt with by the Law. The public executioner of Schweinfurt

A pig was found guilty of killing a child.

got himself into sore trouble by setting aside legal formalities. On June 9th, 1576, a pig was taken in the act of attacking a boy; it had bitten off his ear and mangled his hand, but was beaten off before further injuries could be inflicted. The captor gave the pig into custody, and in ordinary circumstances the customary farce would have been enacted. Why the executioner interfered does not appear; but he seized the pig, and forthwith conveyed it to the execution ground, where he hanged it before a crowd—"to the disgrace and detriment of the city," says the indictment. Such was the indignation of the local judiciary that the man had to fly for his life; he never dared show his face in Schweinfurt again.

As a general rule the Mosaic injunction to cast away the flesh of animals thus destroyed was scrupulously obeyed; and nobody will cry out upon our forefathers for this. In 1553 a number of swine were hanged for child-murder, and the carcasses were thrown into the river. This was not the usual way of disposing of the bodies of executed animals; faithful to the principle of treating such criminals in every respect like humans, they were usually buried under the gallows. Exceptions are on record; thus at Ghent in 1578 a cow attacked a man and inflicted injuries which did not prove fatal; the cow was brought to trial and condemned to death; but, apparently because her offence had not amounted to murder, it was ordered that her head be struck off and set on a pole near the place of execution to show that the beast had paid the last penalty, the meat to be made over to a butcher for sale. Half the proceeds of such sale to go to the injured man, the other half to the poor of the town.

For lesser crimes lesser punishments. When the dog belonging to the drummer of an Austrian regiment bit a member of the Town Council in the leg, that official sued the owner for damages. The man respectfully declined to be held responsible for the misdoings of his dog, but offered to meet justice half-way; he would surrender the criminal to be dealt with as justice might decide. This offer was accepted; the dog was brought before the Court, found guilty, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment in the iron cage in the market-place wherein it was customary to confine persons who did anything to disturb the public peace. Whether this step satisfied the bitten town councillor does not appear.

A RAM which disturbed the peace of a Russian town at some time during the latter part of the seventeenth century was treated with greater severity—from the human standpoint, though probably the offender bore its penalty with calm. Found guilty of habitually butting inoffensive pedestrians, that ram was sentenced by the Court to be banished to Siberia, where it might exercise its pugnacity on other human exiles if it pleased. It sounds absurd; but when we read of a church bell being banished for ever to Siberia because it rang the signal for insurrection, we need not look for sense in the treatment of rams. The church bell incident took place at Uglich in 1591. It may be added that so recently as 1892 the bell was "pardoned" and

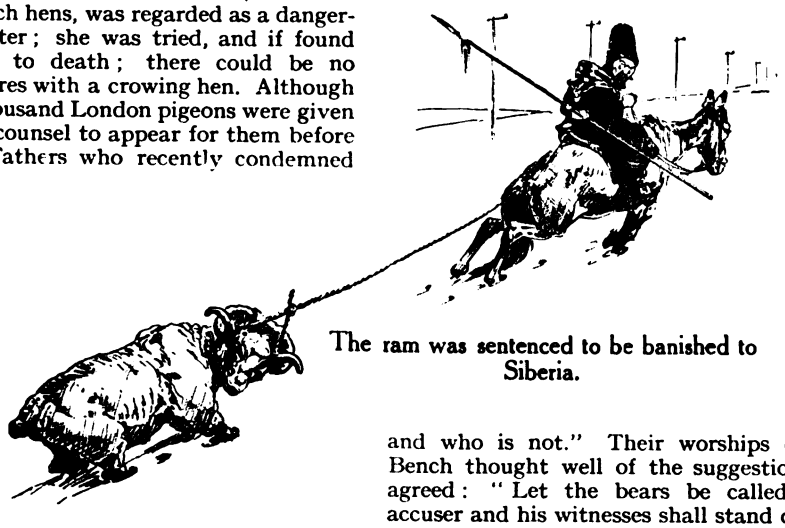
brought back for restoration to its old place.

Birds sometimes got into trouble with the Law. There is at Treyes, on the river Mosel, a tradition that if a swallow flies into the cathedral it will fall dead. The origin of this lies far back in history. When Egbert was Bishop of Treyes he was sorely vexed by the incursions of the swallows, whose chattering disturbed the congregation; and, what was worse, defiled the altar with their droppings. This was not a case for the lay Court, and the bishop took the matter into his own hands. He was evidently a benevolent man, for he refrained from extreme measures and merely forbade the birds to enter the cathedral at all on pain of death. The swallows must have been impressed by his leniency, for (it is recorded) they thenceforward put the cathedral out of bounds.

Domestic poultry often came under the ban of the Law. The aged hen whose voice became hoarse and tried to crow, as is the habit of such hens, was regarded as a dangerous character; she was tried, and if found guilty put to death; there could be no half-measures with a crowing hen. Although the two thousand London pigeons were given no official counsel to appear for them before the City Fathers who recently condemned them to death, there was not wanting plenty of testimony on their behalf from independent witnesses.

We ourselves have put animals in the witness-box; and why not? You can't swear a dog, but canine evidence may be more reliable than human. Some years ago in a London police-court the magistrate was called upon to decide the ownership of a terrier. Jones, in whose possession it was found, claimed the dog; Brown declared it was his. The magistrate, a wise man, left the question to the dog himself, who settled it the moment he was brought into court by turning tail disdainfully on Jones and loudly claiming Brown for master.

Quite recently bears were put in the witness-box, metaphorically speaking, at Berne. Every visitor to the Swiss capital knows the Bear-pit, and it was in connection with this the case arose, an assistant-keeper charging the head-keeper with ill-usage of the bears. The head-keeper, accordingly, was haled before the Cantonal Court accused of cruelty to the animals, and the assistant-keeper gave evidence, calling other men as witnesses in support of his assertions. The head-keeper denied their statements *in toto*, and called witnesses in support of his denials. It was the word of several men against the word of several others, and the Court was in a quandary. Then counsel for the accused had a brain-wave: "Take the evidence of the bears themselves!" said he; "they'll know who is kind to them and who is not." Their worships on the Bench thought well of the suggestion, and agreed: "Let the bears be called; the accuser and his witnesses shall stand on that side of the court, the accused and his witnesses on the other."



The ram was sentenced to be banished to Siberia.

The men lined up as ordered, and two bears were brought in. They settled the case at once, for no sooner did they catch sight of the assistant-keeper who had posed as their friend and protector than they "went for" him, one aiming a savage blow at his face.

It was very evident that he did not like that assistant-keeper and had a score to settle with him. On the other hand, when the head-keeper called the bears they followed him quietly out of court and, we may suppose, went home with him to dinner.

The MARACOT DEEP: The Lost World under the Sea

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Illustrated by
TOM PEDDIE

V.

OF course, after the first shock the affair did not seem so incomprehensible. We remembered the falling glass, the reefed sails of the experienced Norwegian skipper, the strange black cloud upon the horizon. Clearly there had been a sudden cyclone of phenomenal severity and the *Stratford* had been blown over. It was too evident that all her people were dead, for most of the boats were trailing in different states of destruction from the davits, and in any case what boat could live in such a hurricane? The tragedy had occurred, no doubt, within an hour or two of our own disaster. Perhaps the sounding-line which we had seen had only just been wound in before the blow fell. It was terrible, but whimsical, that we should be still alive, while those who were mourning our destruction had themselves been destroyed. We had no means of telling whether the ship had drifted in the upper levels of the ocean or whether she had lain for some time where we found her before she was discovered by the Atlantean.

Poor Howie, the captain, or what was left of him, was still at his post upon the bridge, the rail grasped firmly in his stiffened hands. His body and that of three stokers in the engine-room were the only ones which had sunk with the ship. They were each removed under our direction and buried under the ooze with a wreath of sea-flowers over their remains. I give this detail in the hope that it may be some comfort to Mrs. Howie in her bereavement. The names of the stokers were unknown to us.

Whilst we had been performing this duty the little men had swarmed over the ship. Looking up, we saw them everywhere, like mice upon a cheese. Their excitement and curiosity made it clear to us that it was the first modern ship—possibly the first steamer—which had ever come down to them. We found out later that their oxygen apparatus inside their vitrine bells would not allow of a longer absence from the recharging station than a few hours, and so their chances of learning anything of what was on the sea bed were limited to so many miles from their central base. They set to work at once breaking up the wreck and removing all that would be of use to them, a very long process, which is hardly accomplished yet. We were glad also to make our way to our cabins and to get many of those articles of clothing and books which were not ruined beyond redemption.

Among the other things which we rescued from the *Stratford* was the ship's log, which had been written up to the last day by the captain in view of our own catastrophe. It was strange indeed that we should be reading it and that he should be dead. The day's entry ran thus:—

"Oct. 3. The three brave but foolhardy adventurers have to-day, against my will and advice, descended in their apparatus

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to the bottom of the ocean, and the accident which I had foreseen has occurred. God rest their souls. They went down at eleven a.m. and I had some doubts about permitting them, as a squall seemed to be coming up. I would that I had acted upon my impulse, but it would only have postponed the inevitable tragedy. I bade each of them farewell with the conviction that I would see them no more. For a time all was well, and at eleven-forty-five they had reached a depth of three hundred fathoms, where they had found bottom. Dr. Maracot sent several messages to me and all seemed to be in order, when suddenly I heard his voice in agitation, and there was considerable agitation of the wire hawser. An instant later it snapped. It would appear that they were by this time over a deep chasm, for at the Doctor's request the ship had steamed very slowly forwards. The air tubes continued to run out for a distance which I should estimate at half a mile, and then they also snapped. It is the last which we can ever hope to hear of Dr. Maracot, Mr. Headley, or Mr. Scanlan.

"And yet a most extraordinary thing must be recorded, the meaning of which I have not had time to weigh, for with this foul weather coming up there is much to distract me. A deep-sea sounding was taken at the same time, and the depth recorded was twenty-six thousand six hundred feet. The weight was, of course, left at the bottom, but the wire has just been drawn in and, incredible as it may seem, above the porcelain sample cup there was found Mr. Headley's handkerchief with his name marked upon it. The ship's company are all amazed, and no one can suggest how such a thing could have occurred. In my next entry I may have more to say about this. We have lingered a few hours in the hope of something coming to the surface, and we have pulled up the hawser, which shows a jagged end. Now I must look to the ship, for I have never seen a worse sky and the barometer is at 28.5 and sinking fast."

So it was that we got the final news of our former companions. A terrific cyclone must have struck her and destroyed her immediately afterwards.

WE stayed at the wreck until a certain stuffiness within our vitrine bells and a feeling of increasing weight upon our chests warned us that it was high time to begin our return. Then it was, on our homeward journey, that we had an adventure which showed us the sudden dangers to which these submarine folk are exposed, and which may explain why their numbers, in spite of the lapse of time, were not greater than they were. Including the Grecian slaves we cannot reckon those numbers at more than four or five thousand at the most. We had descended the staircase and were making our way along the edge of the jungle which skirts the basalt cliffs, when Manda pointed excitedly upwards and beckoned furiously to one of our party who was some distance out in the open. At the same time he and those around him ran to the side of some high boulders, pulling us along with them. It was only when we were in their shelter that we saw the cause of the alarm. Some distance above us, but descending rapidly, was a huge fish of a most peculiar shape. It might have been a great floating featherbed, soft and bulging, with a white undersurface and a long red fringe, the vibration of which propelled it through the water. It appeared to have neither mouth nor eyes, but it soon showed that it was formidably alert. The member of our party who was out in the open ran for the same shelter that we had taken, but he was too late. I saw his face convulsed with terror as he realized his fate. The horrible creature descended upon him, enveloped him on all sides, and lay upon him, pulsing in a dreadful way as if it were thrusting his body against the coral rocks and grinding it to pieces. The tragedy was taking place within a few yards of us, and yet our companions were so overcome by the suddenness of it that they seemed to be bereft of all power of action. It was Scanlan who rushed out and, jumping on the creature's broad back, blotched with red and brown markings, dug the sharp end of his metal staff into its soft tissues.

I had followed Scanlan's example, and finally Maracot and all of them attacked the monster, which glided slowly off, leaving a trail of oily and glutinous excretion behind it. Our help had come too late, however, for the impact of the great fish had broken the vitrine bell of the Atlantean and he had been drowned. It was a day of mourning when we carried his body back into the Refuge, but it was also a day of triumph for us, for our prompt action had raised us greatly in the estimation of our companions. As to the strange fish, we had Dr. Maracot's assurance that it was a specimen of the blanket fish well known to ichthyologists, but of a size such as had never entered into his dreams.

I speak of this creature because it chanced to bring about a tragedy, but I could, and perhaps will, write a book upon the wonderful life which we have seen here. Red and black are the prevailing colours in deep-sea life, while the vegetation is of the palest olive, and is of so tough a fibre that it is seldom dragged up by our trawls, so that Science has come to believe that the bed of the ocean

is bare. Many of the marine forms are of surpassing loveliness, and others so grotesque in their horror that they are like the images of delirium, and of a danger such as no land animal can rival. I have seen a black sting-ray thirty feet long with a horrible fang upon its tail, one blow of which would kill any living creature. I have seen, too, a frog-like beast with protruding green eyes, which is simply a gaping mouth with a huge stomach behind it. To meet it is death unless one has an electric flash with which to repel it. I have seen the blind red eel which lies among the rocks and kills by the emission of poison, and I have seen also the giant sea-scorpion, one of the terrors of the deep, and the hag fish, which lurks among the sea jungle.

Once, too, it was my privilege to see the real sea-serpent, a creature which has seldom appeared before the human eye, for it lives in the extreme depths and is seen on the surface only when some submarine convulsion has driven it out of its haunts. Two of them swam, or rather glided, past us one day while Mona and I cowered among the bunches of lamellaria. They were enormous—some ten feet in height and two hundred in length, black above, silver-white below, with a high fringe upon the back, and small eyes no larger than those of an ox. Of these and many other such things an account will be found in the paper of Dr. Maracot, should it ever reach your hands.

The captain was still at his post upon

WEEK glided into week in our new life. It had become a very pleasant one, and we were slowly picking up enough of this long-forgotten tongue to enable us to converse a little with our companions. There were endless subjects both for study and for amusement in the Refuge, and already Maracot has mastered so much of the old chemistry that he declares that he can revolutionize all worldly ideas if he can only transmit his knowledge. Among other things they have learned to split the atom, and though the energy released is less than our scientists had anticipated, it is still sufficient to supply them with a great reservoir of power. Their acquaintance with the power and nature of the ether is also far ahead of ours, and indeed that strange translation of thought into pictures by which we had told them our story and they theirs was due to an etheric impression translated back into terms of matter.

And yet, in spite of their knowledge, there were points connected with modern scientific developments which had been overlooked by their ancestors.

It was left to Scanlan to demonstrate the fact. For weeks he was in a state of suppressed excitement, bursting with some great secret, and chuckling continually at his own thoughts. We only saw him occasionally during this time, for he was extremely busy, and his one friend and confidant was a fat and jovial Atlantean named Berbrix, who was in charge of some of the machinery. Scanlan and Berbrix, though their intercourse was carried on chiefly by signs and mutual back-slapping, had become very close friends, and were now

continually closeted together. One evening Scanlan came in radiant.

" Look here, Doc," he said to Maracot. " I've a dope of my own that I want to hand to these folk. They've shown us a thing or two, and I figure that it is up to us to return it. What's the matter with calling them together to-morrow night for a show ? "

the bridge, the rail grasped firmly in his stiffened hands.

" Jazz or the Charleston ? " I asked.

" Charleston nothing. Wait till you see it. Man, it's the greatest stunt—but there, I won't say a word more. Just this, Bo. I won't let you down, for I've got the goods, and I mean to deliver them."

Accordingly, the community were assembled next evening in the familiar hall. Scanlan and Berbrix were on the platform, beaming with pride. One or other of them touched a button, and then—well, to use Scanlan's own language, " I hand it to him, for he did surprise us some ! "

" 2L.O. calling," cried a clear voice. " London calling the British Isles. Weather forecast." Then followed the usual sentence about depressions and anticyclones. " First News Bulletin. His Majesty the King this morning opened the new wing of the Children's Hospital in Hammersmith——" and so on and on, in the familiar strain.

For the first time we were back in a workaday England once more, plodding bravely through its daily task, with its stout back bowed under its war debts. Then we heard the foreign news, the sporting news. The old world was droning on the same as ever. Our friends the Atlanteans listened in amazement, but without comprehension. When, however, as the first item after the news, the Guards' band struck up the march from "Lohengrin" a positive shout of delight broke from the people, and it was funny to see them rush upon the platform, and turn over the curtains, and look behind the screens to find the source of the music. Yes, we have left our mark for ever upon the submarine civilization.

" No, sir," said Scanlan, afterwards. " I could not make an issuing station. They have not the material, and I have not the brains. But down at home I rigged a two-valve set of my own with the aerial beside the clothes line in the yard, and I learned to handle it, and to pick up any station in the States. It seemed to me funny if, with all this electricity to hand, and with their glasswork ahead of ours, we couldn't vamp up something that would catch an ether wave, and a wave would sure travel through water just as easy as through air. Old Berbrix nearly threw a fit when we got the first call, but he is wise

to it now, and I guess it's a permanent institution."

AMONG the discoveries of the Atlantean chemists is a gas which is nine times lighter than hydrogen and which Maracot has named levigen. It was his experiments with this which gave us the idea of sending glass balls with information as to our fate to the surface of the ocean.

"I have made Manda understand the idea," said he. "He has given orders to the silica workers, and in a day or two the globes will be ready."

"But how can we get our news inside?" I asked.

"There is a small aperture left through which the gas is inserted. Into this we can push the papers. Then these skilful workers can seal up the hole. I am assured that when we release them they will shoot up to the surface."

"And bob about unseen for a year."

"That might be. But the ball would reflect the sun's rays. It would surely attract attention. We were on the line of shipping between Europe and South America. I see no reason why, if we send several, one at least may not be found."

And this, my dear Talbot, or you others who read this narrative, is how it comes into your hands. But a far more fateful scheme may lie behind it. The idea came from the fertile brain of the American mechanic.

"Say, friends," said he, as we sat alone in our chamber, "it's dandy down here, and the drink is good and the eats are good, and I've met a wren that makes anything in Philadelphia look like two cents, but all the same there are times when I want to feel that I might see God's own country once more."

"We may all feel that way," said I, "but I don't see how you can hope to make it."

"Look it here, Bo! If these balls of gas could carry up our message, maybe they could carry us up also. Don't think I'm joshing, for I've figured it out to rights. We will suppose we put three or four of them together so as to get a good lift. See? Then we have our vitrine bells on and harness ourselves on to the balls. When the bell rings we cut loose and up we go. What is going to stop us between here and the surface?"

"A shark, maybe."

"Blah! Sharks nothing! We would streak past any shark so's he'd hardly know we was there. He'd think we was three flashes of light and we'd get such a lick on that we'd shoot fifty feet up in the air at the other end. I tell you the goof that sees us come up is going to say his prayers over it."

"But, suppose it is possible, what will happen afterwards?"

"For Pete's sake, leave afterwards out of it! Let us chance our luck, or we are here for keeps. It's me for cutting loose and having a dash at it."

"I certainly greatly desire to return to the world, if only to lay our results before the learned societies," said Maracot. "It is only my personal influence which can make them realize the fund of new knowledge which I have acquired. I should be quite in favour of any such attempt as Scanlan has indicated."

Perhaps the bright eyes of Mona prejudiced my judgment, but I was the least eager of the three.

"It would be perfect madness as you propose it. Unless we had someone expecting us on the surface we should infallibly drift about and perish from hunger and thirst."

"Shucks, man, how could we have someone expecting us?"

"Perhaps even that could be managed," said Maracot. "We can give within a mile or two the exact latitude and longitude of our position."

"And they would let down a ladder," said I, with some bitterness.

"Ladder nothing! The boss is right. See here, Mr. Headley, you put in that letter that you are going to send the universe—my! don't I see the scare lines in the journals!—that we are at 27 North Latitude and 28.14 West Longitude, or whatever other figure is the right one. Got that? Then you say that three of the most important folk in history, the great man of Science, Maracot, and the rising star bug-collector, Headley, and Bob Scanlan, a peach of a mechanic and the pride of Merribank's, are all yellin' and whoopin' for help from the bottom of the sea. Follow my idea?"

"Well, what then?"

"Well, then it's up to them, you see. It's kind of a challenge that they can't forget. Same as I've read of Stanley finding Livingstone, and the like. It's for them to find some way to yank us out or to catch us at the other end if we can take the jump ourselves."

"We could suggest the way ourselves," said the Professor. "Let them drop a deep-sea line into these waters and we will look out for it. When it comes we can tie a message to it and bid them stand by for us."

"You've said a mouthful!" cried Bob Scanlan. "That is sure the way to do it."

"And if any lady cared to share our fortunes four would be as easy as three," said Maracot, with a roguish smile at me.

"For that matter, five is as easy as four," said Scanlan. "But you've got it now, Mr. Headley. You write that down, and in

six months we shall be back in London River once more."

SO now we launch our two balls into that water which is to us what the air is to you. Our two little balloons will go aloft. Will both be lost on the way? It is possible. Or may we hope that one will get through? We leave it on the knees of the gods. If nothing can be done for us, then let those who care for us know that in any case we are safe and happy. If, on the other hand, this suggestion could be carried out and the money and energy for our rescue should be forthcoming, we have given you the means by which it can be done. Meanwhile, good-bye—or is it *au revoir?*

So ended the narrative in the vitrine ball.

The preceding narrative covers the facts so far as they were available when the account was first drawn up. While the script was in the hands of the printer there came an epilogue of the most unexpected and sensational description. I refer to the rescue of the adventurers by Mr. Faverger's steam yacht *Marion* and the account sent out by the wireless transmitter of that vessel, and picked up by the cable station at the Cape de Verde Islands, which has just forwarded it to Europe and America. This account was drawn up by Mr. Key Osborne, the well-known representative of the Associated Press.

It would appear that immediately upon the first narrative of the plight of Dr. Maracot and his friends reaching Europe an expedition was quietly and effectively fitted up in the hope of bringing about a rescue. Mr. Faverger generously placed his famous steam yacht at the disposal of the party, which he accompanied in person. The *Marion* sailed from Cherbourg in June, picked up Mr. Key Osborne and a motion-picture operator at Southampton, and set forth at once for the tract of ocean which was indicated in the original document. This was reached upon the first of July.

A deep-sea piano-wire line was lowered, and was dragged slowly along the bottom of the ocean. At the end of this line, beside the heavy lead, there was suspended a bottle containing a message. The message ran: "Your account has been received by the world, and we are here to help you. We duplicate this message by our wireless transmitter in the hope that it may reach you. We will slowly traverse your region. When you have detached this bottle, please replace your own message in it. We will act upon your instructions."

For two days the *Marion* cruised slowly to and fro without result. On the third a very great surprise awaited the rescue party. A small, highly-luminous ball shot out of the water a few hundred yards from the ship, and proved to be a vitreous message-bearer of the sort which had been described in the original document. Having been broken with some difficulty, the following message was read:—

"Thanks, dear friends. We greatly appreciate your grand loyalty and energy. We receive your wireless messages with facility, and are in a position to answer you in this fashion. We have endeavoured to get possession of your line, but the currents lift it high, and it sweeps along rather faster than even the most active of us can move against the resistance of the water. We propose to make our venture at six to-morrow morning, which should, according to our reckoning, be Tuesday, July 5th. We will come one at a time, so that any advice arising from our experience can be wirelessed back to those who come later. Once again heartfelt thanks.

"MARACOT. HEADLEY. SCANLAN."

MR. KEY OSBORNE now takes up the narrative:—

"It was a perfect morning, and the deep sapphire sea lay as smooth as a lake, with the glorious arch of the deep blue sky unbroken by the smallest cloud. The whole crew of the *Marion* was early astir, and awaited events with the most tense interest. As the hour of six drew near our anticipation was painful. A look-out had been placed upon our signal mast, and it was just five minutes to the hour when we heard him shouting, and saw him pointing to the water on our port bow. We all crowded to that side of the deck, and I was able to perch myself on one of the boats, from which I had a clear view. I saw through the still water something which looked like a silver bubble ascending with great rapidity from the depths of the ocean. It broke the surface about two hundred yards from the ship, and soared straight up into the air, a beautiful shining globe some three feet in diameter, rising to a great height and then drifting away in some slight current of wind exactly as a toy balloon would do. It was a marvellous sight, but it filled us with apprehension, for it seemed as if the harness might have come loose, and the burden which this tractor should have borne through the waters had been shaken loose upon the way. A wireless was at once despatched:—

"'Your messenger has appeared close to the vessel. It had nothing attached and has flown away.' Meanwhile we lowered

The glistening ball shot high into the air, suspending under it the slim figure of a woman.

a boat so as to be ready for any development.

" Just after six o'clock there was another signal from our watchman, and an instant later I caught sight of another silver globe, which was swimming up from the depths very much more slowly than the last. On reaching the surface it floated in the air, but its burden was supported upon the water. This burden proved upon examination to be a great bundle of books, papers, and miscellaneous objects all wrapped in a casing of fish skin. It was hoisted dripping upon the deck, and was acknowledged by wireless, while we eagerly awaited the next arrival.

" THIS was not long in coming. Again the silver bubble, again the breaking of the surface, but this time the glistening ball shot high into the air, suspending under it, to our amazement, the slim figure of a woman. It was but the impetus which had carried her into the air, and an instant later she had been towed to the side of the vessel. A leather circlet had been firmly fastened round the upper curve of the glass ball, and from this long straps depended which were attached to a broad leather belt round her dainty waist. The upper part of her body was covered by a peculiar pear-shaped glass shade—I call it glass, but it was of the same tough light material as the vitreous ball. It was almost transparent, with silvery veins running through its substance. This glass covering had tight elastic attachments at the waist and shoulders, which made it perfectly watertight, while it was provided within, as has been described in Headley's original manuscript, with novel but very light and practical chemical apparatus for the renovation of air. With some difficulty the breathing bell was removed and the lady hoisted upon deck. She lay there in a deep faint, but her regular breathing encouraged us to think that she would soon recover from the effects of her rapid journey and from the change of pressure, which had been minimized by the fact that the density of the air inside the protective sheath was considerably higher than our atmosphere, so that it may be said to have represented that half-way point at which human divers are wont to pause. Presumably this is the Atlantean woman referred to in the first message as Mona, and if we may take her as a sample they are indeed a race worth reintroducing to earth. She is dark in complexion, beautifully clear-cut and high-bred in feature, with long black hair, and magnificent hazel eyes which looked round her presently in a charming amazement. Sea-shells and mother-of-pearl were worked into her cream-coloured tunic, and tangled in her dark hair. A more perfect Naiad of the Deep could not be imagined, the very personification of the mystery and the glamour of the sea. We could see complete consciousness coming back into those marvellous eyes, and then she sprang suddenly to her feet with the activity of a young doe and ran to the side of the vessel. ' Cyrus ! Cyrus ! ' she cried.

" We had already removed the anxiety of those below by a wireless. But now in quick succession each of them arrived, shooting thirty or forty feet into the air, and then falling back into the sea, from which we quickly raised them. All three were unconscious, and Scanlan was bleeding at the nose and ears, but within an hour all were able to totter to their feet. The first action of each was, I imagine, characteristic. Scanlan was led off by a laughing group to the bar, from which shouts of merriment are now resounding, much to the detriment of this composition. Dr. Maracot seized the bundle of papers, tore out one which consisted entirely, so far as I could judge, of algebraic symbols, and disappeared downstairs, while Cyrus Headley ran to the side of his strange maiden, and looks, by last reports, as if he had no intention of ever quitting it. Thus the matter stands, and we trust our weak wireless will carry our message as far as the Cape de Verde station. The fuller details of this wonderful adventure will come later, as is fitting, from the adventurers themselves."

THE END.

Sybil Thorndike—By Her Brother

Further Interesting Chapters from the Life of Our Greatest Actress, by Russell Thorndike, will appear in early issues.

MISTLETOE

By LYNN DOYLE

Illustrated by ARTHUR WATTS

STEPHEN TORNEY could get no sort of a show from the girl's father an' mother when he started courtin' 'Melia Burns. Stephen was a clever fellow and a good farmer, an' would make money before he died; but he was a thin, delicate lath of a chap, an' very quiet an' retirin' in his ways; an' Mr. and Mrs. Burns was of the coarse, lively kind, an' thought people couldn't be enjoyin' themselves if they weren't laughin' till they made the plates rattle on the dresser.

'Melia was a lively wee spark, too, an' liked a joke, but in a quieter kind of a way. She was well enough satisfied with Stephen, except now an' then when the father an' mother would begin gaggin' her about what a stick-in-the-mud of a sweetheart she had got; an' then she'd take it to heart a trifle, an' think to herself that maybe he *was* a bit slow.

All the same, she had a very soft spot in her heart for him, an' he wasn't goin' to have much bother gettin' her consent to a match if he could only win over the father an' mother to his side.

An' that had to be done. 'Melia was the only child they had reared out of five. They'd been hard put to it to rear even her, an' she was dearer than gold to them. They were that fond of her they'd ha' threw her out on the roadside sooner than give her to a man they didn't think good enough for her; an' 'Melia was too good a child ever to let it come to that, even should she die an old maid.

What beat Stephen was that he had to do most of his courtin' at 'Melia's own fireside. Mrs. Burns had been a flighty bit in her day —aye, an' would even pass a joke with a man yet—an' that bein' so I need hardly tell you she was very particular how 'Melia did *her* courtin'.

Anybody that come courtin' 'Melia be't to do it under the father an' mother's eye. I won't say that 'Melia didn't get in a bit of overtime now an' then. But the weight of the courtin' be't to be done at her own fireside.

It was clean death to Stephen's chances. In his own quiet way he could see a joke as well as anybody, an' could talk like a schoolmaster, if he was only sure people liked listenin' to him; but with ould Burns an' the wife fornent him at the hearth, half-time ridiculin' him, he just clean dried up. He could hardly even drink a cup of tay in the house, he'd be that nervous; an' I've seen him gulpin' it down boilin' hot, with the tears of agony runnin' down his face, because he was too bashful to pour it into his saucer like a sensible body. The father an' mother would sit there takin' it all in, an' despisin' him; an' of course 'Melia would see that, and think less of him herself.

I gave him plenty of good advice about holdin' his own better with Mr. Burns—an' troth, as far as farmin' went, he could ha' learned the ould fellow—an' above all I used to advise him to make up to the mother now an' then. With her havin' young notions still in her head, that would ha' done Stephen more good than anythin'. But I might as well ha' saved my breath.

"It's no good, Pat," he'd say. "I've lost heart. They'll never take me for a son-in-law; an' if they don't when'll I be able to make a home for 'Melia, even if she'd have me in spite of them? I'd better quit altogether."

"Blethers!" sez I. "I'll tell you what you'll do. Throw a couple of glasses of whisky into you some night an' go up an' blacken the old fellow's eye if he's impident to you. Both him an' the wife'll have more respect for you after it; an' 'Melia'll think no less of you, I'll swear."

"No," sez he. "I've never lipped drink yet, an' I'm not goin' to begin now. Besides," sez he, with a wee glimmer of a smile, "I

might get a chance some of these nights in that dark kitchen-porch on my way out; an' I don't think 'Melia's as used to a whisky kiss as her mother is."

"Well, troth," sez I, "a whisky kiss is all she'll ever get from you; for if you were in the same dark porch with her from this to bed-time I don't believe ye'd have the pluck to kiss her on spring-water. Tell me," sez I, "did you ever kiss her yet?"

"That's one of the things you don't tell," sez he, tryin' to be jaunty. But I knowed by the way he said it he never had.

"Look here, Stephen," sez I, "you'll never manage to do this job without a hand from somebody. I'll tell you what I'll do. Next Saturday is Christmas Eve. I'll put a lump of mistletoe in my pocket an' go up with you the length of Burns's. About the middle of the evenin' I'll walk across the kitchen an' hang the mistletoe up at the near end of the porch, where it can be just seen. An' if before the evenin's out you haven't the pluck to take 'Melia in your arms below it, an' kiss her before the pair of them, you'll never get her, an' you don't deserve to get her. Come, now," sez I, darin' him. "Have you the pluck to do it?"

He looked at me very hard for a minit, an' then give me a kind of a half-dismal wee smile.

"I've pluck enough *now* to do it, Pat," sez he; "but what bothers me is will I have pluck enough then. We'll try it, old friend," sez he, slappin' me on the shoulder, "an' if I haven't, we'll take it as a sign that 'Melia deserves a better man."

"She doesn't, then, Stephen," sez I, shakin' him by the hand. "You're as good a man as she's ever likely to get."

"Do you know, Pat," sez he, "though I *am* shy, there's times I kind of think that myself. Only, whenever I clap my eyes on 'Melia it somehow goes out of my head."

"Well, that's as it should be, too," sez I. "She's a fine girl. But keep a good conceit of yourself till Saturday night, an' when we're comin' home again you'll be the lucky man."

FOR the first ten or fifteen minutes after we landed in the Burns's house that Saturday night I thought Stephen was goin' to do well. He was quite off-hand an' sparky with the missis two or three times, an' clean contradicted ould Burns once about the price of yearlin' calves. But just at his best in comes 'Melia lookin' a fair picture in a kind of a Red-Ridin'-Hood cloak, her eyes shinin' an' her cheeks like cherries with the cold night; an' with that Stephen clean dried up. He just got a kind of a "Good evenin'" out of him, an' he had to wet his lips with his tongue to get even that out.

I'll say this for 'Melia; she did her best to liven him up, if there'd been any liveliness still in him. She stood fornent him an' shook the frost out of her hair an' tumbled the curls round her rosy wee face till even an ould married man like myself could hardly keep my hands off her. An' then she sat down an' pulled off her wet boots an' held out a foot an' ankle to the fire that would ha' put life into a dead man, let alone into a married one. It was by no accident she done it, either. But all was no use. There come a sort of wishin' look into Stephen's eyes, like a dog when he's tryin' to tell you somethin', an' he gulped once or twice in his throat; but the divil a word he could get out of him.

Of course, the girl's father an' mother spotted the distress of poor Stephen as usual. He nudged her, an' she nudged him, an' the pair of them at the gaggin' of Stephen like a day's work, one tossin' the ball to the other, an' then the two guffawin' an' laughin'; an' 'deed myself joinin' in at the last. It made me mad to see him sitting there lookin' like a sick sheep; an' I thought if I could anger him he might show a bit more pluck.

Two or three times I had good hope of him; for he took some very wicked looks at the ould man. But then 'Melia would say a word or two, just to try an' hearten him, an' he'd freeze up again; till at last she got kind of mad at him, too, an' let him alone.

Shy an' all as I knowed him to be, I'd never seen him anythin' like as bad as this before. But I hadn't altogether forgot my own young days, an' I had a notion what was the matter with him. He had come up the road with me, talkin' very big—for him, that is—an' hopin' great things of himself; an' the way he was lettin' himself down was drivin' him to despair altogether. I could see quite plain that if he done no good this night he'd never have the heart to face into the Burns's kitchen again; so I made up my mind to drive him to do somethin'.

"What this house wants," sez I, "is a bit of mistletoe. We're all too shy to do without it."

An' up I gets an' hangs my wee bunch of mistletoe in the kitchen-porch.

"Come on, Stephen," sez I. "Give us a lead!"

Mr. an' Mrs. Burns let a roar of a laugh, an' both of them looked at Stephen. Stephen took a quick wee glance at 'Melia where she was standin' in the middle of the kitchen floor, an' half riz from his stool, 'Melia never lettin' on she'd noticed.

"He's goin' to do it!" sez I to myself.

An' then Stephen sat down again. If you could ha' seen his face you'd ha' pitied him.

There was a dead silence. 'Melia stole a wee sorrowful glance at me an' shook her head. The tears was on her lashes. She went over an' took her wee red cloak an' hood off the nail.

"Come on, mother, till we see are the hens all in," sez she, puttin' it on; "an' don't be listenin' to Pat Murphy's nonsense. Set a match to the lantern."

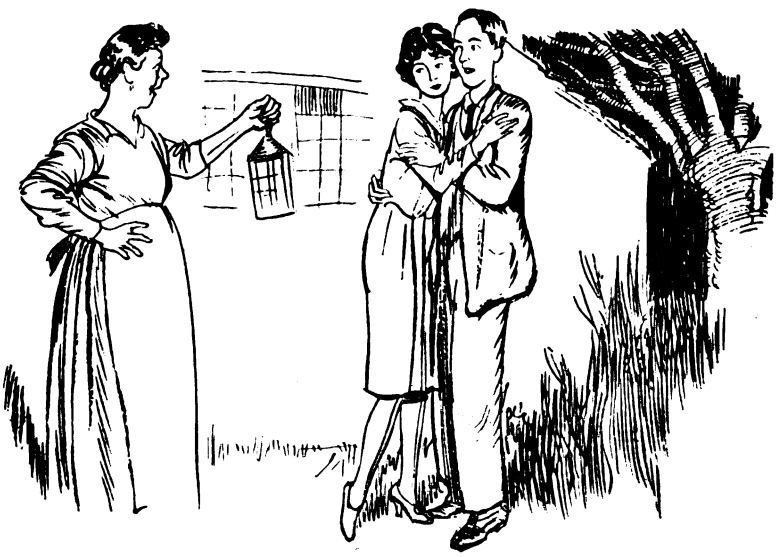
As they went out Mrs. Burns speaks back from the porch.

"You'd maybe better be away before we come in, Stephen," sez she, "or somebody'll be kissin' you under Pat's mistletoe yet."

'Melia's red cloak that was lyin' on the ground. When I did get out, by the light of the lantern I could see 'Melia in Stephen's arms, an' him kissin' her as if he'd never stop. The ould chap was lookin' on half bewildered an' half disgusted, an' Mrs. Burns lyin' up again the wall of the house an' laughin' as if her heart would break.

"There, Stephen," sez she, at the last, "that'll do. Let the child get her breath. You're a better man than I thought you were, after all. I know what you've been snookin' after this long while. Do you want her?"

"*Mother!*" sez 'Melia, shaking her head free. But she didn't sound so very scandalized after all. An' when she turned



"There, Stephen," says she, "that'll do. Let the child get her breath."

There wasn't a word spoke after they were gone. I sat down on my seat again. The ould fellow sucked at his pipe; an' every time he spat in the fire was a bigger insult to Stephen.

Presently we heard footsteps comin' back. The door opened. I looked over my shoulder an' seen a glimpse of the red cloak.

"It's now or never," thinks I to myself, an' hit Stephen a kick on the shin-bone that must ha' skinned it about an inch. But I think he had made up his mind without that; for he up an' across the kitchen like a hare. There was a scuffle in the dark, an' a squeal. The ould fellow lepped to his feet with an oath, an' dashes for the porch, knockin' me over on the broad of my back. When I got myself gathered up the porch was empty, so I out of the back door like the rest, after near breakin' my neck over her head back to Stephen again, there was two of them doin' the kissin'.

"Now don't you be glowerin' at them," sez Mrs. Burns to her man. "I'm givin' my consent, an' that's good enough for you. Come on in, the whole of you, till we have a bit of supper."

"DIDN'T I tell you, Stephen," sez I, as we went home that night, "I knew if you showed a bit of pluck, an' kissed 'Melia fornent her, you'd have the mother on your side?"

Stephen begun to laugh in his quiet way.

"I doubt, Pat," sez he, "neither you nor me is just as clever as you think. Ye see, this was a cold night for a middle-aged woman to be out, an' 'Melia thought she hadn't the same need of a cloak. So she lent it to her mother."

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

CASES FROM MY CRIME-BOOK

THE "EYE OF THE POLICE."
Badge of Parisian Detectives.

By

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(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. XI. THE FOOTPRINTS ON THE CEILING.

"I WISH something truly interesting would come along once in a while," M. Dufresne said to me one morning. "Really crime is very monotonous. What is it, after all? The taking of life or property, and even that can be condensed again and called the taking of something from someone. Bah!"—and my chief yawned with obvious ill-humour.

"I agree with you," I replied, amused at his pessimistic summing up; "but you forget that it's not what is done, but how and by whom. Surely you don't complain of lack of variety. I have just been going through the police archives in order to classify all cases which have points in common, and I assure you that there are very few which can be entered under the same heading. Professor La Marra, for instance, was only a murderer, but what a strange type!"

"Well, all right; we see things differently. Now, this morning we have to go to St. Germain. A girl has been strangled. I'll wager it will be just a commonplace sex drama or else suicide. Come along; get your implements. I have a car waiting. We'll lunch at some pretty country restaurant. It's a fine day, that's one comfort. St. Germain is noted for its wine cellars. Rousseau is already there; trust him not to miss such an opportunity! He calls it getting evidence."

When I came down from the laboratories a big police automobile was vibrating with the restrained energy of its powerful engine at the door of the dingy Sûreté headquarters, and we were soon roaring through the suburbs of Paris towards the countryside.

The house where the dead girl had been found was on the outskirts of the extensive forests for which St. Germain is famous. It was a large place standing in spacious grounds and surrounded by enormous gnarled oaks. Rousseau met us at the iron gates.

"I've not touched anything, monsieur," he said, saluting M. Dufresne. "The case is too strange, and needs a better brain than mine. This way"—and he led us along winding flower-bordered paths until we came

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Cadoudal, the chief figure in this extraordinary case.

to the house itself. In front of this was a wide lawn with several ancient spreading trees on one side. Two gendarmes were guarding the path and we could see the huddled body of a girl, with long golden hair, lying on her face just under the largest of the trees.

"The doctor telephoned to say that she had been strangled," said my chief. "What is there strange about that?"

"Nothing, except that there have been heavy showers the last two days; the ground is not gravel, but a soft clay soil, yet there are no signs of any other footsteps than the dead girl's. She is the sister-in-law of M. Harrison."

"What, the famous trainer?" M. Dufresne asked in surprise.

"Yes. The girl and his wife are both English, but M. Harrison is an American. The body was found this morning by a servant. His footprints can be seen crossing the lawn as far as the edge of the path. He ran back at once and alarmed the household, and M. Harrison allowed no one but the doctor to approach the body."

"When did she die?"

"Dr. Maupert thinks that it was before midnight. She has been strangled by huge hands. I've obtained some boards so that we can approach without making any marks on the soft path."

"All right! Then call the doctor. I'll examine the ground."

We walked carefully along the planks to the body, which was that of quite a young girl, certainly not more than twenty. She was not very tall, and there was a slight deformity near her shoulders, as though she had suffered from a twisted spine.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FOOTPRINTS.

WE at once perceived the traces of the girl's small pointed shoes. She had evidently been strolling slowly and aimlessly, judging by the short steps, until she arrived at the tree. There her footsteps ceased suddenly.

"Look at the last imprints," my chief cried, excitedly. "Only the toes can be seen, but they have sunk deeply into the ground and are quite close together, as though she had stood on tiptoe. What does that mean?"

A thick branch which projected over the path just above the body had attracted my attention. "It looks as though she had been seized from above and lifted by the throat," I answered.

M. Dufresne turned to the doctor. "You say she was strangled by hands, not by a rope, Dr. Maupert?"

"There is no doubt about that," the doctor replied, emphatically. "Huge muscular fingers have left deep bruises. Look for yourself."

Since there was nothing to be gained by remaining where we were, we approached the body, taking care not to step on any footprint. M. Dufresne scrutinized the girl for a long time, then he looked at the knotted limb above her.

"Quite impossible, your theory," he said to me. "The branch is at least twelve feet from the ground. Even if the murderer let himself dangle down from his knees he could never have reached the girl."

"No—unless he was hanging by a rope."

M. Dufresne grunted impatiently. "Get to work with your cameras. Rousseau shall fence off that piece of ground. Then I'll see this Harrison, and afterwards I'll 'phone M. Bertillon. It serves me right for grumbling this morning. This case is certainly strange and interesting enough but if, as you think, the criminal climbed into the tree and lay in wait above the path, there will be plenty of signs of his presence on the bark and among the smaller twigs. He could not have held the poor girl without swaying and slipping, and our microscopes will soon settle that question. Don't let anyone approach that oak, Rousseau."

The old Brigadier nodded and gave orders to the gendarmes to fetch ropes and wooden stakes. My own work was quickly done; and, leaving my cameras, I walked to the house, where I saw my chief in animated conversation with several people. Foremost among these was Jim Harrison, the famous trainer. He was holding a slim woman, who was sobbing bitterly in his arms, and alternately trying to soothe her in English

and shouting at my chief in almost unintelligible French.

When M. Dufresne saw me he waved his hand eagerly.

" I do not understand this man," he said, shrugging his shoulders with a helpless gesture. " Please translate my questions and his answers. What is it he is trying to say ? "

I turned to the American.

" My chief would like you to tell me what you know about this tragedy."

" Say, are you English ? " he shouted at once. " Well, I guess that's some smart of the police. I was beginning to think they were hopeless. This is a dreadful, damnable business. My poor, poor little harmless Daphne—to be murdered in such a foul manner by a beast. There, there, sweetheart ! " as his wife burst into a convulsive fit of crying.

" You see, Daphne was a cripple until two years ago, when Father Duvernois, the parish priest, advised her to try Lourdes. A wonderful place, though I'm not a religious man myself. She came back cured, except for a little lump below the shoulders."

" Yes, yes," M. Dufresne said, when I had translated, " but we want to know about the crime. Have you any idea who killed her ? "

" I have, but you won't believe me. She was not killed by a man at all. My neighbour, M. Cadoudal, has a great big chimpanzee which is always roaming about in the woods——"

" Nonsense ! " my chief interrupted. " A chimpanzee is a small animal, and not at all dangerous. It could never have strangled the girl. So that's what he has been trying to tell me ! Who is this M. Cadoudal ? "

' Say, he's all right, a fine man, but I don't like his pets. His father was an animal trainer and left them to him."

" The father is dead, then ? "

" Nope—in an asylum near here. Got bitten by a big cat—a puma, I think —and went mad. '

Mme. Cadoudal.

" Will you tell us as clearly as you can all that happened last night ? "

" Sure. I played ' pelote ' with M. Cadoudal till eight ; he's a Basque from the Pyrenees. Then after dinner Daphne said she'd go for a little walk. She often walked in the garden in the evening when there was a full moon like last night. We have a big malemute I brought back from the Klondike ; his name is Toto, and we always thought him to be sufficient protection for the little girl. Father Duvernois was here, but lately Daphne and he haven't hit it off well, and when he offered to go with her she said ' No,' and went and fetched Toto. About eleven Father Duvernois left. He stopped to talk a minute with Daphne in the rose garden——"

" How do you know ? "

" Because he told us so when he came this morning, as soon as he heard what had happened. We thought Daphne had gone to bed before twelve, for we heard her door shut and Toto howling from his kennel. He does that sometimes when he's chained up. It wasn't till this morning, when the gardener, Jules, came running, that we knew what had happened." And at the words the big man wiped his eyes and blew his nose noisily.

" What makes you speak of the monkey, then ? " my chief queried.

" Because I telephoned to my friend Cadoudal when I saw that there were no other footmarks than those of poor Daphne——"

" You noticed that ? "

" Sure. I used to hunt a lot up North. Footprints were the first thing I looked for. That's why I let no one go near the body. Cadoudal admitted that Jim Jim—that's the monkey —had been out all the evening. May we carry poor Daphne into the house now ? "

" Wait a little longer, please. I want M. Bertillon to find everything untouched when he comes. I will use your telephone now, if I may."

BERTILLON FINDS A CLUE.

AN hour later the great criminologist arrived on the scene and began his investigation. The branch overhanging the path was minutely examined, but there were no marks of any kind on the bark nor on the tree. Only one little shred of evidence did we find which seemed to confirm the trainer's theory. A handful of brown woolly fur was hanging from a sharp jagged stump jutting out just above the first limb. M. Bertillon detached this carefully and placed it in a small box, but said nothing. The bruises on the girl's throat appeared to puzzle him, and a tracing was made of them. Finally he remarked: "We will go and interview this man Cadoudal now. The body may be moved; there is nothing more we can do here."

As we walked towards Cadoudal's house, the grounds of which adjoined those of the trainer, Bertillon slipped his arm under Rousseau's with a friendly gesture.

"Now, Brigadier, I've heard that the wine in St. Germain is very good. What have you discovered?"

Rousseau looked embarrassed for a moment, then with a shrewd glance at his chief he said:—

'Only rumours until now, monsieur. The dead girl had quarrelled with the priest, and people say there was some scandal; but as yet I've nothing more precise."

"Very well. Then go along and see if you can find out what the trouble was about between the priest and the girl. I also want you to make inquiries about a one-legged man. He has a round stump in place of his right foot. I imagine that he does not belong to St. Germain."

Rousseau at once trotted off towards the path leading to the town.

We were all startled at this unexpected order, for we had seen no signs of such a man anywhere.

"Then you think that the chimpanzee had nothing to do with the crime?" M. Dufresne asked in surprise, for the finding of the fur had shaken his first opinion. M. Bertillon halted and pulled out the box containing the handful of hair.

"Look at this," he said. "I'll wager that when I examine it at the laboratory I shall not find a single root-bulb. It's dead; by that I mean it is fur which has been torn from a coat. It never came from a living body. I should not be surprised if we find that it was placed in the tree purposely to mislead us."

M. Cadoudal, a tall, swarthy man with the features of a Spaniard, was lying in a basket-lounge when we arrived. He appeared pale and ill. Near him, squatting on the ground and attached by a heavy chain, was a huge full-grown male chimpanzee.

M. Cadoudal held out his hand to M. Bertillon.

"Pardon me, messieurs, if I do not rise. I have a bad attack of malaria to-day. I often suffer from it. There is Jim Jim. I know what my friend Harrison thinks, but Jim Jim would not hurt a fly. Sheer nonsense."

"Will you call a servant to hold him?" M. Bertillon asked. "I wish to measure his arms and hands."

Although the chimpanzee chattered angrily and struggled to get away, he did not once attempt to bite whilst Bertillon made careful measurements of the body and arms and obtained impressions of the strangely human hands with their long nails. When Mme. Cadoudal, a pretty little woman, whose grey eyes and red hair made a strange contrast to the sunburned appearance of her husband, came running from the house and patted and stroked Jim Jim, he quietened down immediately and became as docile as a child. After Bertillon had questioned M. Cadoudal and his wife at some length, we returned at once to headquarters and waited in his office while he went to examine the fur taken from the tree. He came back almost at once and motioned us to seats.

"You see," he began, thoughtfully, "the ape had nothing to do with the crime. This is goat's hair, perhaps from a chauffeur's coat. You all noticed the long nails of the chimpanzee, yet the skin on the poor girl's neck was not even scratched, quite apart from the fact that the branch is much too high for the ape to have been able to reach anyone so short as this Mlle. Daphne. No, the murderer knows both families well and also knows Harrison's dislike for Jim Jim, and left that fur purposely."

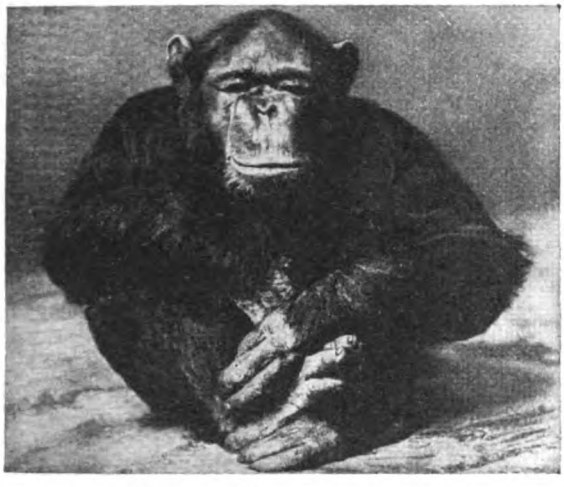
"But the one-legged man?" Dufresne asked. "How did you find out about him?"

"His tracks were all along the grassy bank behind the tree. A rope may have been dropped over the girl's body, by which she was pulled up to where the murderer was crouching. I don't know yet—we must wait for Rousseau."

Late in the afternoon Rousseau came into my office and sat down with feigned nonchalance. I could see that he was holding himself in check with difficulty.

When I put my instrument down he leaned forward and growled:—

"What a genius Bertillon is! I found out all about the one-legged man. He is



Cadoudal's chimpanzee—Jim Jim.

an ex-Zouave—lost his foot in Morocco. Two years in the penal battalions for wounding a comrade. *Apache*, burglar, and worse. He's been hanging about Harrison's place for days, and there are others with him. He bought some meat at a horse-butcher's yesterday, and several poisoned pellets have been picked up near that big Alaskan dog's kennel. Probably tried to get rid of him."

"What does the chief say?" I asked.

"I think he's puzzled. He can't see any motive for the crime. Nothing was stolen. But I've discovered something that may supply the motive. Father Duvernois is in love with Mme. Cadoudal; that is the scandal people were hinting at. The dead girl knew of it and had quarrelled with the priest."

"Oh, you mean he may have hired this *apache* to kill Mlle. Daphne?"

The Brigadier nodded.

"I'm off now to watch the fellow," he said. "For the moment we are marking time, but the records are at work on the pasts of all these people."

He nodded and withdrew, and I shelved the whole matter, believing that days would pass before anything further happened.

THE NEW MURDERS.

I WAS hardly awake the next morning when, to my astonishment, Rousseau came pounding on my door. He was tremendously excited, and shouted: "Come along, hurry now! Both Harrison and his wife have been killed!"

'What?" I yelled, seizing the Brigadier by the arm. "When did it happen?"

"I don't know—I've been on the trail of the *apaches* all night; haven't even been to bed. Dufresne and Bertillon are waiting."

A crowd surrounded the gates of the unfortunate trainer's house when we arrived, and a cordon of police had much trouble in keeping them back. A servant, shivering and babbling with excitement, led us into the dwelling.

"In the wine-cellar," he gasped. "Madame is there—poor, poor lady."

The cellar was a vast place, lit by two electric bulbs. Along both sides were bins filled with bottles, and at one end several vats loomed dimly. On the stone floor in front of one of the bins was the little woman we had seen crying so bitterly the day before. She was lying on her face, her tousled hair spreading out on both sides of her shoulders; near her was a wicker basket with two broken bottles which had probably contained burgundy. A dark pool of this had formed near her

The one-legged ex-Zouave who was frightened away by Cadoudal and the ape.

outstretched hand and soaked into the ground.

"Taken by surprise whilst fetching some wine," Bertillon muttered, gazing around. Suddenly he uttered a wild cry of surprise and terror, and pointed with shaking hand at the white ceiling.

"Look! Look!" he called, shrilly. "What devil's work is this? *There are footprints on the ceiling!*"

A shiver of superstitious fear ran down my spine at the words, and for a long, long minute we all stood staring spellbound at the incredible sight. Beside an iron girder, running the full length of the vault, were several clear imprints of a naked foot!

"Ten feet from the ground at least," M. Dufresne groaned. "Is it conceivable that anyone or any animal can walk on a ceiling like a fly? This is ghastly."

We were still gazing, too astounded to move, when a hoarse bellow from Rousseau completed our terror.

"The ape! The ape! There, by the window, chief!" Our eyes followed the direction of his pointing finger, and for a second we had a fleeting vision of a bestial simian face grimacing through the dusty glass of a tiny barred window at the extreme end of the cellar.

"After him! Catch him!" Dufresne yelled. "But don't shoot. We must clear up this mystery."

Rousseau clattered up the stone steps and disappeared. Bertillon turned to his colleague with a puzzled frown; his wonted calm was returning rapidly, but I saw that he was pale and shaken.

"We are foolish," he said, "to suppose even for an instant that the anthropoid ape we saw yesterday did this. The idea is absurd. A gorilla, now, would kill a human being, but not a chimpanzee. No, some clever scoundrel has hit on a novel method for laying a false trail. I'll find him, if it's the last thing I do. Let's get to work. Send several of your men to watch the Cadoudal house and grounds. We will investigate here first. Where is the trainer's body?"

"That was found in a field near a tall tree. Harrison was fully dressed and lying on his side with his dog beside him. The man has been strangled, but the dog's head was crushed by a heavy blow. Colbert reported that there are no signs anywhere of a human presence. Several police are guarding the place. Harrison had a gun with him, and Colbert believes that the trainer went in search of the creature responsible for these killings and was attacked from behind."

At that moment Rousseau returned.

"It could not have been the ape, monsieur," he exclaimed, "for I went as far as Cadoudal's house and saw it there, chained up and feeding."

"And was M. Cadoudal there also?"

"Yes, lying in the sun on a basket-lounge. He looked ill. I had no instructions, so I did not show myself."

"Quite right. We'll go there later. Call the doctor and let's have his opinion. Measure and photograph these footprints. In fact, let us act normally. Hang it, are we to be tricked like children?"

It was the first time I had seen the great criminologist really angry. No doubt the shock to his nerves had much to do with it, but I knew also that he would now work night and day until the mysterious murderer was discovered.

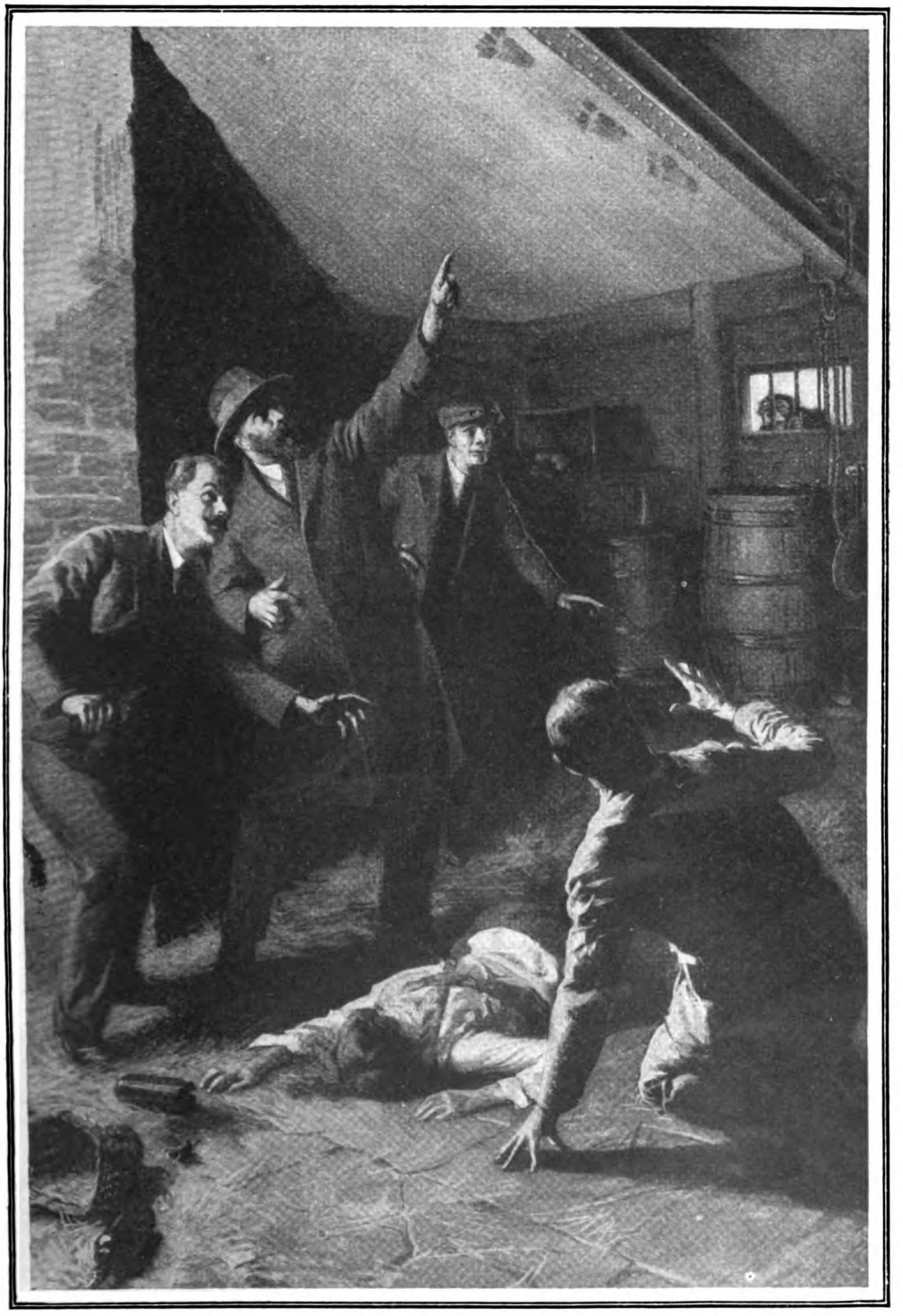
Mrs. Harrison,

Who was found dead in the cellar.

THE PREHENSILE FEET.

AFTER an hour's feverish labour M. Bertillon looked at me and smiled.

"You see how wrong it is to jump to conclusions. There is a space between the girder and the roof, and in the dust are marks like clutching fingers and several broad spaces where the dust has been completely wiped off. They were made by some weird creature with prehensile feet who used the girder to hang from, head



"Look!" he called, shrilly. "What devil's work is this? *There are footprints on the ceiling!*"

downwards. He pressed with one foot against the ceiling once or twice for purchase, whilst moving along with a leg thrown over the narrow iron. I would not have believed that it could be done had I not seen these traces myself."

"What kind of creature, monsieur?" Dufresne asked.

"I cannot say yet. The footprints appear to be human, yet only a gorilla could hang by his feet like that. Come, let us go to the field where the trainer is lying. What of the woman, Dr. Maupert?"

"Lifted and strangled, just like the sister."

"Very well. We can do nothing further here."

We found Harrison lying in a meadow. On his neck were large blue bruises, whilst the Alaskan dog was stretched at full length on the opposite side of the tree, its head smashed by a terrific blow. Bertillon's sharp eyes picked out several minute marks in the dust of which plaster casts were immediately taken. They had been made by naked feet, of which the sides only had touched the ground.

"Those are an ape's footprints, surely?" I asked my chief, but he only shrugged his shoulders impatiently and led the way to Cadoudal's house.

We found the owner still resting on a couch in the sun. He appeared even more pale and languid than on the previous day.

"This is a terrible thing," were his first words. "Here I am, utterly helpless, whilst my best friends are being murdered. Can I assist you in any way?"

"Yes. I should be glad if you would answer a few questions, and then I desire to see all your servants and your wife. What pets have you besides Jim Jim the chimpanzee? You haven't a gorilla?"

"Good heavens, no! They can't be kept in captivity. I have a puma—the same animal which bit my father; also several dogs and a tame bear."

"The chimpanzee is often allowed to roam about your grounds. Was he free an hour ago?"

"No; he has been unusually excited lately. A full moon is his worst time, and he has been chained up since yesterday."

"Thank you. Now call the servants, please."

Cadoudal struck a bell standing on a small table. In answer, a swarthy, hairy fellow came gliding from the house. His tread was soft and noiseless and he approached us obliquely like a cat. There was

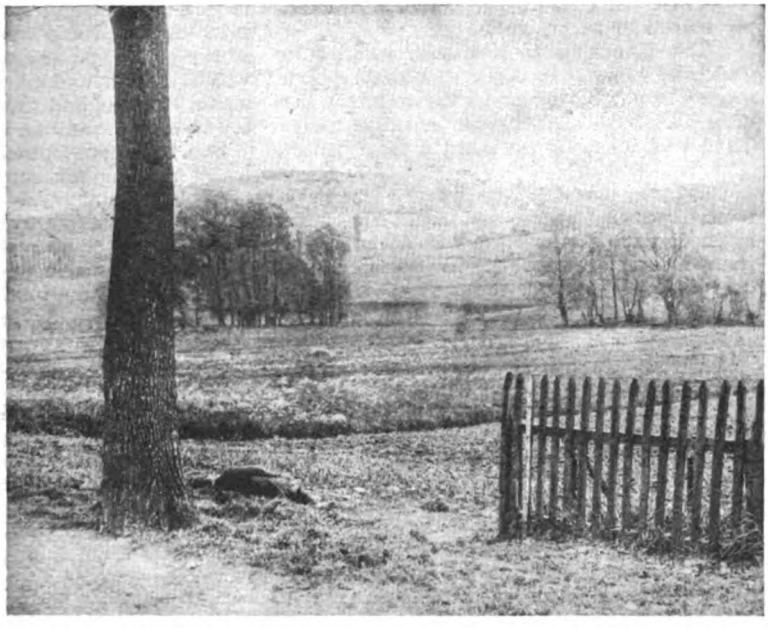
One of the footprints found on the ceiling of the cellar above the body of Mrs. Harrison.

something extremely repulsive about the man, and the unpleasant impression he produced was heightened by the manner in which his tiny beady eyes flickered from one to the other of us, observant, yet never coming to rest.

"This is Matteo Bassao," Cadoudal said. "He is a Basque, like myself, and has been with me for years."

"Take your shoes off," Bertillon snapped, "and your socks. I want to see your feet."

The fellow complied at once. His feet were small and narrow and were obviously not those which had left their imprint in the cellar. The questions which M. Bertillon put to the other servants were of no help whatever. Whichever way we turned we came to a blank wall.



The body of Harrison as it was found on the same day that his wife was murdered.

ON A FRESH SCENT.

"IF only I could find a motive," Bertillon said to me; "but Cadoudal and Harrison were great friends. So were the women. What the devil does it all mean?" Suddenly he smashed his fist into his open palm. "The asylum—of course! Come along—perhaps we'll find the solution there."

I failed to grasp my chief's meaning, but there were times when his brain worked in a manner beyond our understanding. Giving terse orders to the driver, Bertillon climbed into the car, leaving Dufresne and Rousseau on watch. The famous private asylum of Dr. Carmagne was soon reached, and the director greeted his distinguished visitor with obvious awe.

"You have the father of M. Cadoudal here," Bertillon at once snapped, waiving polite greetings. "He was formerly Hagenbeck's greatest animal trainer, was he not? What are the characteristics of his madness?"

Dr. Carmagne looked startled. "He is a dangerous homicidal maniac."

"Animal tendencies?"

"Yes. We have to be careful how we approach him. He bites and tries to throttle the attendants at certain periods."

"His worst time is when the moon is full, I suppose? Are his feet prehensile?"

"They are, M. Bertillon. How did you know? You've never seen him. Furthermore, he is also, at certain times, a somnambulist, and at his worst at the full moon."

"Are you quite sure he cannot get out of his cell?" Bertillon asked, pointing an accusing finger at the doctor.

"Absolutely. He is always watched; his cell is padded and the window barred; and at the approach of full moon we generally put a strait-jacket on him."

My chief nodded, but there was a gleam in his eyes which I knew well. "Are you certain that his madness was caused by the bite from the puma?"

"No—but it caused an outbreak of acute mania. Until then the man had only been—well, eccentric."

"Thank you, doctor; that is all I wished to know."

"You do not suspect us of negligence, monsieur, surely?"

"Oh, no, doctor. Pardon my abrupt manner; it is a bad habit to which I give way when I am following an idea that has not yet formed."

We left the asylum and Bertillon ordered me to return to my colleagues.

"Tell Rousseau to hide and watch the Cadoudal house," he said. "I shall return soon. You'd better go to the hotel of the Clefs d'Or with M. Dufresne and dine there. Then wait for me at dusk at the local police-station."

Dufresne was frankly puzzled when I related our visit to the asylum, but his faith in the great criminologist was so profound that he never thought to question his decisions. We spent the rest of the day discussing the case.

THE MONSTER REAPPEARS.

NIGHT had completely come when Bertillon drove up to the Commissaire's office. His car was crowded with armed police, and two other cars carrying gendarmes with rifles were close behind; I saw that two police dogs had also been brought. M. Bertillon had hardly entered when there was a loud outcry in the street and a man dressed in rough forester's clothes, and followed by a woman, came pushing his way excitedly into the police-station.

The man was livid and held one hand tightly clutched to his throat, whilst the woman was sobbing and shaking with terror, her dilated eyes looking from one to the other of us with an unseeing stare. It was some minutes before we could obtain a coherent statement from either of them.

"Two wild animals attacked me, monsieur. Two huge hairy apes as big as bears. They jumped from a tree when I was coming home and nearly strangled me. I am a wood-cutter, and luckily I had my axe. Oh, it was terrible! I struck at the one in front of me and cut his arm, and at that the other let go of my throat and sprang at the one I wounded. I ran and ran—for ever so long, and at last I came to my house. My wife was on her knees praying when I came in. She says she had already seen it all in a vision."

"What nonsense is this?" the Commissaire barked, shaking the man roughly. "If you were attacked far from home, how could your wife see it?"

"Oh, but she did, monsieur, she did. Ask her."

The woman related that she was preparing the supper for her husband's return and had carried the lamp into the kitchen. It was whilst she was laying the table in their living-room that she was startled by a terrible snarling cry. The sound was so awful that she had not the courage to turn to shut the door which led into the wood. Suddenly a round light appeared on the wall in front of her, and although the room was pitch-dark she saw her husband struggling in the grip of two great hairy monsters. It was like a horrible nightmare. She saw him swing his axe, and then in sheer terror she fell to the ground in a faint.

She had just recovered and was on her knees praying for her man when he came stumbling in.

"Your back was to the door, you say?" M. Dufresne asked the terrified woman. "And what was in front of you?"

"The wall, sir—just the wall; but I saw it all. The two devils sprang from a big tree. I remember that I noticed that one of the branches was broken and hung down, touching the ground."

M. Dufresne looked doubtfully at the Commissaire, but the latter merely shrugged his shoulders and touched his forehead significantly. During this byplay Bertillon had been walking up and down the room deep in thought. Suddenly he looked up, and I saw that all indecision had vanished from his eyes.

"All right," he said, sharply. "We won't stop to discuss this matter now. Come along, all of you, but go softly when we get to the forest. We are hunting big game to-night. The man and woman had better remain here."

The wood was like a dark cavern; only now and then did the light of the moon filter through the thick roof of leaves. Twice we took the wrong path, and only found the wood-cutter's house at last by the merest chance, for the woman had extinguished her lamp before leaving. M. Bertillon pushed the door open and entered the tiny living-room. A heavy axe was lying on a chair. The edge was bloodstained, and some hairs were still adhering to it.

"His story is true, then, but what about his wife's vision? By Jove, look!" and Bertillon pointed to the glass door of a cupboard in which the full moon was reflected through a gap in the trees. One of the branches of a beech just in front of the house was broken and dangled to the ground. "She saw it in that glass, which, with the dark curtain behind it, makes an excellent mirror. The attack must have taken place outside this hut, and the fellow was so terrified that he ran away from his home instead of towards it. We're in luck. Bring the dogs to the tree; they'll pick up the trail."

THE HUNT IN THE WOOD.

THE two big sheep-dogs which had been brought by one of the gendarmes were led forward. They ran around the beech several times, their noses to the ground.

and then started off, whining softly. Orders had been given that no lights were to be used, and it was difficult and unpleasant work advancing through the tangled shrubbery. Thorns whipped and tore at our hands and faces, creepers twisted round our legs, and decaying logs and deep holes caused a man to fall with a rending crash at every moment. I was glad that we were a numerous company and well armed, for the thought of some uncanny beast suddenly dropping on me from a tree made me shiver. Several times we heard dogs barking and men shouting in the distance, and the sound made our hearts beat convulsively. We had stumbled on through the gloom for perhaps half an hour when our dogs stopped and raised their heads, sniffing in an agitated manner. We were in a clearing, and not far away was a large house.

"Cadoudal," Bertillon whispered to me; then, turning to the police holding the dogs, he said: "Unleash them and follow at a run."

The instant the heavy thongs were slipped from their collars the dogs started forward. We had not expected them to disappear so quickly, and raced across the leaves and moss, sliding and falling over broken branches. Suddenly a horrible gurgling scream rose in a long ululation in front of us, followed by frantic barking and a short staccato bellow that sounded like distant thunder.

"Help! Help!" came in Rousseau's voice, and two sharp reports from a heavy pistol added to the uproar. Panting with the exertion of our frantic dash through the trees, we came upon a scene which I shall never forget.

Rousseau and the two dogs were struggling with a snarling, biting, whirling form which threw them hither and thither as though they were rats, whilst a few feet away a long, dark, fur-covered shape lay sprawling in an ungainly heap on the path.

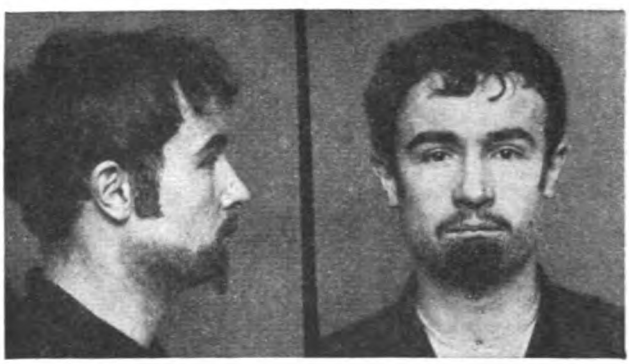
Again Rousseau's pistol spat redly, just as a gendarme sprang forward and seized the dogs by their collars. The creature they had been attacking fell to the ground in a frenzied, furious convulsion as we came up, and I saw that it was the chimpanzee. Rousseau, pale and shaken, pointed with a trembling hand at the motionless form on the path. Bertillon stooped over it and directed the rays of his torch at the head, and we saw with horror that it was Cadoudal, dressed in a complete tight-fitting garment of dark fur, which made him akin to his

Cadoudal still wearing his strange hairy garment—from a photograph taken after his death.

companion the ape. Lights were now flashing from the house and people came running.

"Keep his wife away," Bertillon ordered. "She mustn't see him like this." Then he knelt and raised the man's head. As he did so the eyes opened and Cadoudal stared at us with a vacant plaintive expression.

"What has happened?" he groaned. "I feel ill. I've had another dreadful nightmare. Oh, God, when will they cease?"



Matteo, the faithful servant of the Cadoudals.

It was visible that the man had only a moment to live. One of Rousseau's shots had pierced a lung, and as we lifted him his head fell back with a last gurgling moan. Bertillon wrapped the body in a long overcoat which hid his strange garment, and ordered two gendarmes to carry him into the house. The chimpanzee had only received a scalp wound and was already recovering. We tied his hands and feet and, after washing the wound, locked him in a stable.

Mme. Cadoudal met us on the stairs. One look at her face told us that she knew the reason for the tragedy.

"Tell me that he is dead," she moaned, stretching out appealing hands. "Oh, my love, my love! How I have prayed that he should never know the truth!"

"He died without knowing what has happened, madame," said Dr. Bertillon, sternly; "but we must ask you to tell us what you know, for there have been dreadful crimes committed, and by your silence you have become his accomplice."

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

FOR the moment, however, the woman was incapable of understanding what was being said. She had followed us into the room in which the police had placed the body and threw herself with a wild, agonized wail to her knees beside it, caressing the dank black hair and kissing the cold mouth. With a start I saw that Matteo, the unpleasant servant with the shifty eyes, had silently entered also. He bent over the sobbing woman and said in a deep voice that was hoarse with emotion:—

"Come, madame. God has been good and spared him the knowledge of his dreadful inheritance. These police dogs don't understand; do not let them see your pain. I can hear their handcuffs jangling." Then, turning on us with a snarl which bared two long yellow fangs, he spat rather than said:—

"What is it you want to know? I'll tell you all so long as you leave my poor mistress in peace. Yes, my master was mad—cursed with the same animal taint as his father. Like his father, he, too, had prehensile feet." (This would explain how the murderer had hung from a branch twelve feet off the ground, had lifted the unfortunate girl Daphne off her feet, and strangled her in mid-air.)

"By day my master was the kindest, best of men," continued Matteo; "but at night—when the full moon shone—he became a monster, an ape, such a creature as man probably was a million years ago. But he never harmed anyone, and he never knew what he did, but thought only that he dreamed at nights. We couldn't bear the thought of shutting him in an asylum, and so it was my duty to lock him in his room when the fit seized him. Nothing would ever have happened but for the unhappy chance that I fell ill, and during my absence he discovered how to open his window and began to roam in the forest with Jim Jim."

"But you must have known that it was he who strangled your neighbours?" Bertillon asked, gently.

"We believed at first that they had been killed by some ruffians with whom there was a horrible one-legged man," Matteo replied, softened by Bertillon's obvious sympathy. "They have been seen loitering in the neighbourhood, spying on us, for nearly a week. It was only yesterday that we began to suspect what really had happened. Even then we hoped and prayed that we were mistaken. Why my master, who was so kind and gentle, should have had such a fearful curse laid on him I

cannot tell. Perhaps it is the price he paid for a great sin committed in a past life. We Basques are an ancient race, and once held all Africa under our rule. Who can measure the power of the Evil One, monsieur? Master never willingly murdered his best friends, for he was like a big brother to poor crippled Daphne. I locked him in his room again to-night, but he broke down the door and got away."

"What happened, Rousseau?" Bertillon asked, turning to my colleague.

"I was watching the house, monsieur, when suddenly two frightful roaring beasts broke out of the bushes and rushed towards me, followed by the dogs. It was only when the bigger of the two sprang at my throat that I saw it was a man; but I saw also by the insane glare in his eyes that it was his life or mine. So I fired. I didn't know you were so near."

"I quite understand, Rousseau; you are not to blame. Did the ape attack you too?"

"Yes; he appeared to be wounded in one arm, and at first only screamed and chattered, but when I fired at—at M. Cadoudal he turned and leaped at me. Fortunately the dogs had got him by the legs."

"Then the anthropoid will have to be destroyed immediately. Where did your master get that strange hairy garment, Matteo?"

"I saw it to-night for the first time, monsieur. He must have made it in secret from goatskins."

"Well, you must come with us, and your mistress also. The judge will decide whether you have committed a crime or not."

But Matteo and Mme. Cadoudal were never sent to prison. The unfortunate wife died a week later from brain-fever, and when Matteo learned of the death of his mistress he committed suicide by swallowing a tablet of poison which he had hidden in his hair.

(*Next month: "Chang Foo Lee: A Tale of Hanoi Shan, 'the Spider'."*)

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 175.

(*The Third of the Series.*)

WE bore him, town and isle, stupendous man—
How many greater since the world began?

1. Another mighty soldier, Goth by race.
2. In Latin heaven held the second place.
3. Element indispensable for breath.
4. Arboreal accompaniment of death.
5. Besieging this, great sailor lost an eye.
6. Equality of measure will imply.
7. Here, if you search the book of Revelation,
   You find, appropriately the termination.

KING COLE.

Answers to Acrostic No. 175 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on February* 10*th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 174.

(*The Second of the Series.*)

OUR little hero took his seat,
A Christmas pie he had to eat;
With skill he used his little thumb,
And from his pie he pulled a plum,
His name for *number one* will do,
And where he sat is *number two*.

1. Half of a game with stick and ball;
   The key has gone beyond recall.
2. A mighty river, or a State;
   Three cries the sound may indicate.
3. To rise, or educate, may mean;
   The hindmost part is also seen.
4. As any schoolboy knows, abyss,
   Book, Peter, apple—each is this.
5. The ruler of an empire we
   Cut, and the first four letters see;
6. Three letters will supply the rest,
   And all that ruler has been guessed.

REMUS.

1. H	o	C
2. O	h i	O
3. R	e a	R
4. N	o u	N
5. E	m p	E
6. R	o	R

NOTES.—Light 1. Hockey. 5 and 6. Emperor.

THIRTY-SIXTH SERIES: RESULT.

THE thirty-sixth series proved considerably harder than most of its predecessors; it had one very satisfactory feature—while no solver succeeded in answering every light, no light remained unsolved. Full marks were 35; Wals and Wrig scored 34, and take prizes of three guineas each; Caliban, Cyno, Darnlinvarach, and Pobre scored 33, and win prizes of one and a half guineas each. These six solvers will be ineligible for prizes in the current (thirty-seventh) series.

Wals is Mr. W. Stradling, 3, Charlbury Road, Oxford; Wrig is Mrs. R. Lee, 17, Clarence Street, Kingston-on-Thames; Caliban is Mr. D. F. Ferguson, Royal Naval College, Dartmouth; Cyno is Mr. C. Norman, 28, Duke's Avenue, New Malden, Surrey; Darnlinvarach is Major Drummond, Falcon Lodge, Putney, S.W.15; Pobre is Mr. G. Darby, 13, Lansdowne Gardens, S. Lambeth, S.W.8.

THE DECIDING FACTOR

By

AUSTIN PHILIPS

Illustrated by
NORMAN SUTCLIFFE

"That's the girl."

"AND you have no suspicion of any member of your staff?"

"On the contrary, I have very definite suspicion!"

"What is the man's name?"

"It isn't a man. It's a woman!"

"A woman?"

"Yes. Most certainly a woman!"

The Postmaster of Plackton rose now, crossed the room, came to the door which led out into the sorting-office, and put his

eye to a place where the " frosting " of the glazed upper panel had been scraped away for some half-inch or so by a thumbnail.

" That's the girl, Staplehurst ! " he announced dramatically, stepping back and giving place to the Investigator whom he had admitted, some time before, by the other door which led out into the Public Office—admitted as an ordinary caller who had asked for a personal interview about the alleged misdelivery of a letter.

" That one over there at the tables ? "

" Yes. And as cunning as they're made. Artful as a car-load of monkeys. Bet your life that she got the job here with faked credentials ! "

The St. Martin's le Grand official remained stationary for a moment, considering the small, ruddy-haired, trim-figured, neat-footed clerk who was disposing of a handful of letters with such extreme rapidity and precision. Then he turned back to the Postmaster.

" What is her name—and what makes you suspect her ? " he asked, curiously.

" Her name is Lois Goodson. At least, she says it is. But her papers are wrong."

" Her papers ? "

" Yes. Her official dossier, her record, the ' Form 141 ' in respect of her sent me by the District Surveyor when she came to me, six months ago, as assistant. She is stated therein to have seen service at (among other places) Alnwick in Northumberland and Bakewell in Derbyshire. Well, we had a clerk from the latter place staying here on his holidays. I had the curiosity to ask him about her, and he told me that in all the twenty-five years he had been at Bakewell he had never set eyes on the young woman. Then I wrote and inquired at Alnwick. She was altogether unknown there ! "

" Whew ! You have reported the matter officially ? "

" Oh, no ! "

" But why not ? "

" Because I am waiting for the District

Surveyor, or one of his staff, to pay a visit here, so that I can mention the matter amicably. If I merely put it on paper, one of the record-clerks in his office might get a bad wigging for what, after all, is possibly a mere clerical error in transcribing the records—and I don't want to make a needless enemy. It isn't, really, the record business. It's the girl's manner and personality. There is something elusive and mysterious about her. She is above her situation, socially as well as educationally. She carries guns that no other clerk here carries. And she spends a lot of time in Worcester!"

"And she was on duty that Sunday when the registered-letter bag was stolen here—or, at least, seemingly stolen here—when the night-mails failed at Birmingham and were brought in about ten o'clock in the morning and lay unopened in this office until the following Monday?"

"Yes. She came on at half-past three on the Sunday afternoon, to make the afternoon outward dispatch, and she would have been quite alone in the building, save for a postman who was in and out, making a town collection and stamping letters. The couple left the place again at five p.m., and no one—nominally, at least—entered it until four o'clock on the Monday morning. But I was on leave, and out of England at that time, and I know nothing of the matter, save from hearsay!"

"Ah, yes, Heggarty. If you had been here the matter would probably never have happened, or you would have been able to help towards a solution. By the way, I wonder if she is by any chance mixed up with the gang which is responsible for so many postal robberies in the Midlands, and for that perfectly dreadful murder of the Birmingham to Bristol mail-van driver last winter? I must take steps immediately to see what she is made of!"

"You mean you'll 'test' her?"

"At the earliest possible opportunity. By the way, has this office got a watching gallery?"

"A small one, with a single window. But it commands everything."

"And the entrance?"

"Here!" The Postmaster touched a door which stood flush with the wall of the room, and just behind his own chair. "Do you want the key?"

"Not at present, thanks. It's as well that I should get away now. What's your address in the town?"

"Twenty-five, East Street."

"Good! I'll look you up later. I suppose you are off for the day?"

"Oh, yes. As usual on Sundays!"

"What time will you be back?"

"Ten, sharp. I leave Worcester by the bus which starts at nine-thirty."

"Then I'll call on you to-night. A pleasant outing. I suppose you still won't touch promotion?"

"Not I. I am far too happy here, at Plackton!"

"Yes, of course. You poets like the country. *Au revoir*, my dear fellow!"

The Investigator from St. Martin's le Grand remained for just another ten seconds, looking interestedly through the gap in the glazing at the woman who had been indicated to him as probably responsible for a series of postal order thefts here—as well as a daring robbery of registered letters some months before. Then he passed out through the other door which led into the Public Office. As he shook hands with the Postmaster he added audibly, for the benefit of the clerk at the counter, "Well, thank you very much, Mr. Heggarty. You have quite satisfied me that wherever my letter was delayed no one at this office was responsible!"

As Heggarty returned to his table he smiled faintly, and his lips and nostrils indicated surely that he did not highly rate his visitor. But his mood soon altered into graveness. He sat for quite a considerable time with chin cradled in hands, eyes staring into vacancy, evidently thinking with great intensity. He remained, indeed, almost motionless until ten-thirty, at which hour the office closed until three-thirty in the afternoon, when it opened again for the Sunday dispatch, being again closed at five and remaining empty until four o'clock next morning. When the clerks had gone he left the building and went to his lodgings in a side-street near the abbey. Twenty minutes later he left again, to catch an omnibus which passed through Plackton, coming from Evesham.

No one who saw him would ever have taken him for a petty provincial Postmaster, for not only was he of striking appearance, but he was turned out flawlessly by a first-class London tailor. James Heggarty—now a few days over forty—was no ordinary postal official.

Just twelve years ago, when employed up in Town at the secretarial section, he had published a volume of verse which had attracted great interest in literary circles, and which had brought him favourably under the notice of a Mandarin who was famous as an essayist. A few months afterwards Heggarty applied for, and was given, the vacant office at Plackton, a small abbey town on the Avon where (he said) he desired to live quietly and to write only such poems as really pleased him.

Since then he had published other volumes—though none quite as good as the first one. He had never accepted promotion. He seemed wholly content with his life here, having (so it was assumed) a private income. His leisure hours he spent in Worcester, where his books were in Brown's and Crichton's windows, and where the Union Club had welcomed him as a member.

It was to that same "Faithful City" of Worcester that the omnibus was just now taking him. As it stopped at the Cross he strode rapidly down the Foregate and, turning sharp to the left, just before the road forks to Droitwich and Kidderminster, went down a street which led towards the Severn. Some way along it he entered a villa—converted into flats recently—and climbed to the top floor.

THE door was opened by a richly but somewhat slovenly-dressed woman who had been watching his approach from a front window. Tall, well-formed, handsome, and passionate-looking (Heggarty was slight almost to thinness), she returned the visitor's embrace with an ardour which was fierce, yet maternal.

"You are an hour late!" she said, reproachfully.

"Yes. But I couldn't help it. I was detained at the office by a caller. Something's happened!"

"Something serious?"

"More or less. I'll tell you all about it."

Heggarty went through into the biggest room of the flat. It was furnished with extreme voluptuousness. There were rugs from Kairouan. There was brass-work from Morocco. There were innumerable books—many in fancy editions—while the grand piano was littered with music and the floor strewn with periodicals. Indeed, a definite though luxurious untidiness deformed an otherwise beautiful apartment.

"Another Investigator from Headquarters?" began the woman, when Heggarty had settled on the big Chesterfield and she, sitting close beside him, had taken his hand and was fondling it.

"Yes. That's just it. A young, cocksure chap, named Staplehurst!"

"Always about that bag of registered letters?"

"No. That business is more or less given up as a hopeless job. But someone has been helping himself to letters—any fool who really knew anything about things could see that it was in the T.P.O., and not at Plackton. But I've encouraged the fellow in his theory!"

"How?"

"I've told him it's a girl in my office!"

"But why, darling?"

"Because I want to sidetrack him finally!"

"Has he interrogated her yet?"

"No. He's going to 'test' her!"

"But if she's innocent he won't catch her!"

"Oh, yes, he will!"

"How, Jem?"

"Because, Rosamund, I mean to plant some stuff and make some evidence. It's rough luck on her (though I have my strong suspicions she's on the same lay as ourselves—though outside the office altogether), but she must take her chance like the rest of us, and once she is locked up all suspicion will be diverted from Plackton for the time being, and you and I can make a getaway!"

"You have quite finally decided to clear out, darling?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, my dear. You have been right in so urging me—ten thousand times right. Things have been altogether too dangerous since I came back from leave in France—where Headquarters knew I had gone—and swiped that bag of registered letters from my own office and caught the Southampton-New York liner next morning to Cherbourg. And after that hold-up of the Birmingham-Bristol mail-van on the Lickey Hills—and what happened there—my nerve has gone, as you've begun to notice. It was touch and go, remember!"

"But no one has ever suspected you!"

"Thanks to sheer good luck. But just think what might have been. First I lost my watch——"

"But only that cheap gun-metal thing you bought specially for such outings—bought over in Bruges, by the way, so that nobody here could ever connect it with you!"

"I know. I know. But that wasn't all, remember. I lost a button from my coat——"

"Which coat—in fact, the whole suit—you brought to me!"

"And you burned it, with its bloodstains!"

"You know I did!"

"Then it's luck again, isn't it, Rosamund? But luck turns sometimes. That's why I want to 'beat it while the going's good.' We'll be out of England finally when March comes!"

"Finally?"

"Yes. Finally. This is what I propose, darling. Shake a couple of cocktails, and I'll explain to you!"

The drink was shaken and poured. Again the Poet-Postmaster of Plackton—who had risen to stride the room for a space—settled down on the Chesterfield beside the woman who had been his partner for ten years now. He had found her at a Worcester Literary Society—a young elementary

school-teacher, dazzled and attracted by his verses. He had made love to her, had also made her independent of her calling, had seen her (as so often happens in such cases) develop out of all recognition, become stronger than himself, discover how he gained his money, then impel him, aid him, serve him, plan, protect.

"What I propose," he continued now, "is that (so soon as this girl, Lois Goodson, has been convicted and sentenced at Quarter Sessions and all suspicion has been removed from Plackton, and the suggestion having been made by me in the witness-box that she is in league with the supposed gang of mail robbers, and that these letter thefts are just a small personal individual effort of hers) I shall apply for my annual leave immediately, on the grounds of ill-health—a full month, as usual, being due to me. I shall then cross to Spain (you coming separately, but by the same boat and trains), ostensibly to recruit at Malaga. Once in that country we can take steamer from Cadiz to South America, where we can settle down permanently. We'll build there. I'll renew my poet's impulse—and with it requicken our old affections. Dear old girl" (Heggarty's arms now went impulsively round his companion, who returned his embrace still more passionately), "what the devil does it matter who sinks or swims so long as you and I can find peace together? You're the one and only woman who ever really meant anything to me—and you've stood by my side in my best coups!"

SOME hours later Heggarty stood at the door of the flat again. He was saying *au revoir* to his confederate.

He had not spent an idle Sunday. This morning he had bluffed a Headquarters Investigator—bluffed him hopelessly. This afternoon he had disclosed his intentions to, and talked things over with, Rosamund Aylmer. This evening he would also be busy—in the very cruellest of ways.

"By the way. Those three things!" he remembered, just as he was leaving.

"Purple, you said, didn't you?"

"Yes. I saw the shade just now in your workbox!"

The woman hurried out and came back again, bringing a reel of purple cotton, thimble, and needle. Heggarty pocketed the first two, and hid the third in his letter-case. Then, having again bidden good-bye to this woman around whom, to-day, he moved and had his being, the Postmaster of Plackton ran downstairs and turned speedily into the Foregate, and thence strode up to the Cross.

But he did not get into the omnibus for Plackton, although there happened to be one waiting. He entered a building on the corner.

It was the well-known Union Club; one of the pleasantest places of its kind in all provincial England; its name derived not from any political bias, but because many years ago, two rival clubs had been fused in it. It was his habit, every Sunday, to look in there about five (usually returning to the flat afterwards); and to-day, of all days, he had no intention of departing from this long-established custom.

He went up to the smoking-room on the *entresol*.

"Hullo, Postmaster!" exclaimed Hubert Thorold, the assistant solicitor to the County Council, an able young official who was marked for early promotion.

"Hullo, Poet!" cried a young local coal-merchant who had won glory as a county cricketer.

Heggarty greeted them warmly. They were great cronies of his; for though he was a dozen years their senior he had kept his youthful spirit quite astoundingly. The three, who were the only occupants of the room, chatted and swapped stories for an hour or so. Then Heggarty got up regretfully.

"Sorry! But I must go!" he announced.

"You won't stay and feed with us?"

"Can't possibly. I'm going out!"

"Here in Worcester?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Never mind!"

"*Cherchez la femme*, old man. We all know there's a lady!"

Heggarty laughed, but made no denial. Going to wash his hands, he did not, as it happened, return into the hall of the club, but passed out into a side-street through a back entrance into which he had been called by a just-arrived member, that he might advise on a damaged motor-cycle. He walked straight down to Shrub Hill. There he got into the six-ten for Oxford. It stopped, as always, at Plackton.

That station is out in the country, and Heggarty walked the mile and a quarter to the town by a circuitous route which avoided the High Street completely, and which brought him to the lower entrance of a lane up which, some two or three hundred yards farther, lay the mail entrance of the post-office.

He reached this last—two large doors opening inwards on a courtyard, and now padlocked. He shinned up and over them instantly. With his master-key he unfastened the back door of the building. Inside, he turned on a couple of lights only.

The burners were fixed low down above

"After that hold-up of the Birmingham-Bristol mail-van on the Lickey Hills —and what happened there—my nerve has gone."

the sorting-tables, and their wide green shades made the atmosphere of the big room deeply mysterious. Its ceiling, too, was high, and much of the roof was of glass, and his footsteps echoed frighteningly. Used as he was to visiting this office of his at all hours of the night, for purposes legitimate and otherwise, he had never been able to rid himself when alone there of a curious sensation of terror.

For this reason, more than from any actual necessity, he was now expeditious about his business. He did not go into his own room yet. He went straight across to the tables.

There had been, of course, no delivery that Sunday morning; but the mails, which had come in, as usual, at four a.m., had already been opened, and their contents divided for town and country areas. They stood on end in the usual heaps, making perhaps eighteen or twenty different stacks.

These he picked up consecutively, searching among them for such letters as might possibly contain postal orders. Having selected a couple of dozen, he opened them methodically. Five postal orders were the result.

He took these last, and the envelopes which had contained them, leaving temporarily on the tables those other envelopes which he had opened fruitlessly. Then he crossed to the door of the women's retiring-room, which, like all the doors of the rooms on this floor, opened out of the sorting-office.

Inside the room was a nest of lockers. Opening with his master-key that belonging to Miss Goodson, he placed inside it the five envelopes and three of the postal orders—placed them right at the back, underneath half-a-dozen magazines which had evidently not been moved for some time past.

Then he crossed to a purple overall which was hanging on one of the pegs and took out the needle, thread, and thimble which Rosamund Aylmer had given him at Worcester. After that he carried the garment out into the sorting-office, and sat down under a light. He unpicked the hem, which was deep, as the owner was small, and the thing had necessarily been shortened for her. He inserted the two remaining postal orders, re-sewed the hem, and then carried back the overall to its peg. Miss Goodson was duly trapped. To-morrow, that young cub of an Investigator would give him — James Heggarty — a "test" letter to put in her way. Of course, she would not steal it. But he himself would put it in the fire and then report it as missing, and Staplehurst would tackle Miss Goodson and find nothing. In a terrible state of distress and anxiety for his own reputation, he would presently search the locker, leap at the discovery, go on (at Heggarty's suggestion) to examine her overall pockets, discover the postal orders sewn within its hem, and have overwhelming evidence for a conviction. It was unscrupulous, damnably, diabolically. But it was nothing after that murder of the mail-man. It meant removal of suspicion for all time, now; freedom of mind, and escape with Rosamund Aylmer.

Heggarty came back finally to the tables, intending to burn at his lodgings the rest of the opened envelopes. He stuffed them into his pocket accordingly, walked doorwards, and touched off the switches.

JUST then a sound shrilled through the building, echoing and re-echoing in the stillness. It came from his own room, and was unmistakable in character. It was a telephone call.

A telephone call. Not an unusual sound. Nothing extraordinary in a post-office. At least, not in most post-offices. But this one here at Plackton had a peculiarity which (on account of departmental economies) it shared with others similarly situated. Though it had its silence-cabinet in the public counter, although it sent its telegrams across the wire by word of mouth to its half-dozen subordinate rural offices, it was not the central exchange locally. To have kept a special telephonist on duty all day and all night there would have cost the taxpayer a heap of money; and Heggarty, being a bachelor, did not sleep on the premises. Hence the exchange was at a local shop where one of the members of a large family could always be sure of being at home.

The call meant, then, that someone had specially demanded Heggarty and that the exchange—though knowing that the post-office must almost certainly be empty—had made the connection accordingly. For a moment he had been genuinely frightened—as was indeed only to be expected, seeing what he really was, and what he had been doing in the building. He hesitated whether or not to ignore the call completely, and then decided to answer it. After all, it might be something important; and in any case no one would ever dream for a moment that he, in his position and with his high literary and departmental reputation, could to-night have planted in Miss Lois Goodson's locker such letters as she might so easily have stolen when on duty between eight-thirty and ten-thirty this morning.

He went in, then, and took up the receiver.

"Is that you, sir?" an unknown voice asked, anxiously.

" Yes, yes," he replied after a moment of hesitation, divining that he was not the person wanted, and determined to have some explanation.

" It's Mr. S. ? "

" Yes, of course."

" I'm Garland. I'm speaking from a call-box in Worcester. I've something special to tell you. I followed H. to his club a couple of hours ago. He hasn't come out again. I now find that there are two entrances. So I let you know, sir—in case he should come back and find you ! "

The words put Heggarty in a cold sweat. His limbs trembled. His hand shook. His heart thumped at his ribs, and a great fear took hold of him ; a fear so strange and so sickening that he had never before known anything in all his forty years' experience which even faintly approximated to such sensations.

Two things were the basic, bedrock causes of this. The first was that he was evidently under strong suspicion. The second was that someone probably—indeed, almost certainly—was at this moment secreted in this building.

" Have you any other instructions, sir ? " came the question now.

" No, none for the moment, Garland. Just keep on watching where you are ! " he managed, striving to imitate Staplehurst's voice, but failing so badly that the man in the Worcester call-box must surely realize that it was not the Investigator speaking.

Then, his hand still trembling violently, he managed to replace the receiver, knocking it as he did so against the brackets. What he saw next made him collapse nearly.

Someone had been in his room since that morning. Someone, who was still in the building, had probably got out of that room in prodigious haste just as that someone had heard him—James Heggarty—shin those outside doors and cross the courtyard. For the drawers of his desk were open—opened with duplicate keys, surely—and that mysterious somebody had been searching them.

Where was that person now ? Was he hidden in the sorting-office, or had he, possessing a master-key, gone inside that mysterious door just behind the desk (the door which Heggarty had shown to Staplehurst that morning), which led up a dozen steep stairs to the little watching gallery with the frosted-glass window which commanded the tables ? Had that person seen him take the letters and lay the trap for the luckless Lois Goodson ?

Where should he search first ? What was he to do when he discovered the intruder. He himself was weaponless. Anticipating no trouble, he had come without his revolver.

IN a mad state of terror now, and out of instinct—for he felt that to open that door which led to the watching gallery and to climb those steep dark stairs might lead to himself being thrown down headlong or shot ruthlessly—Heggarty rushed out of his room, determined to fly the building through the door by which he had entered it, to leave Plackton, England, and to hide.

But, entering the sorting-office, he received a shock to which the first had been as nothing. For, close by the exit, someone was now standing.

It was not the Investigator, Staplehurst. It was she whom he had designed to ruin. It was Lois Goodson.

Little, trim, ruddy-haired, neat-figured, and neat-footed, she looked at him scornfully ; her well-cut, dainty features giving her the aspect of a miniature Mrs. Siddons.

" So you have been trying to do me in ! " came her words, cold, disdainful, and contemptuous.

" What do you mean ? "

" What I say. You intended to make a case against me ! "

" No, I didn't ! "

" Oh, yes. Very much to the contrary. I was hidden in the overseer's ' pulpit.' I saw you take those letters. I saw you go into the retiring-room and open my locker and put something in it. I saw you sew two postal orders inside the hem of my overall."

" I—I——"

Heggarty broke off incoherently. It did not seem much use going on—since she had actually seen him. Nor did he feel disposed to waste time which was precious—indeed, everything. His nimble poet's brain, smartened up and made realistic by business, worked rapidly. He essayed a wholly different game now.

" And you ? " he began, smiling cynically ; losing much of his fear as he realized (or thought that he realized) the amusing, paradoxical position, and thinking, even, that in his haste and fear he had misunderstood the telephone message, and that it had been for *her*—from some confederate who had been watching him. ' And you, my dear girl. Isn't it rather a case of the pot belittling the kettle ? "

" I don't think so, Mr. Postmaster ! "

" I do. Now, look here, my lady. Shall we call it quits ? "

" What do you mean ? "

" I mean—to be precise—that I have caught you, red-handed, breaking into the Plackton post-office. You are not on duty. You are alone here. You have obviously

broken in with a fel—let us say, an unorthodox purpose. I admit, frankly, that I had my own reasons for wanting to make a case against you. But those reasons are finally disposed of by your presence here. I will take it all back!"

"Will you? You can't, I am afraid!"

"Why not?"

"Because I don't choose you to!"

"But *I* choose. See here—and here—and here!" Heggarty pulled out envelope after envelope, and flung them all upon the sorting table. "You are right in my power. I am Postmaster, please remember. I make a surprise and legitimate visit to my office, and I discover you here, without authority, with rifled letters lying around, and the doors of my desk opened; and I go straight to the police and denounce you. You'll soon see whose story receives credit. Damn you! Don't laugh like that. If you don't come to terms, I'll run you in myself—and that instantly!"

Heggarty took a threatening step forward. But he stopped dead in his tracks a second later. For the girl had snatched something from the patched pocket of her skirt and was pointing it at him. It was what he had neglected to bring. It was a revolver.

Then—even as he caught his breath and his hair stood on end—something banged violently behind him, and the building rang to the very roof, echoing and re-echoing with the shivering, shattering sound of broken glass.

Turning in a flash, he looked upward. But the noise had not been made by the skylight falling inward from the weight of any person lying, watching, on it. It was the frosted window of the built-out observation chamber which had been pushed out thus violently. A man—the man who had called on him that morning—stood looking down, pointing a revolver.

Turning in a flash, he looked upward. The frosted window of the observation chamber had been pushed out.

And, lightning-like, the swift, keen brain of James Heggarty saw salvation in the young man's presence.

" Mr. Staplehurst ! " he shouted, " come down instantly. This young woman has broken in and stolen letters. Look at those down on the floor here. I have made a first-class capture ! "

" No. It is she who has done that ! "

" She ! "

" Yes, and I also, Heggarty. We have your watch ! "

" My watch ? "

" Yes, the one you lost on the Lickey Hills that night the mail-van driver defended himself so gallantly when you beat him to death with some heavy weapon. The watch was found months afterwards. It was rusted—but inside the cover were your initials ! "

" I never put them there ! "

" That I grant you. But the watchmaker did ! "

" What watchmaker ? "

" The Worcester man—the one to whom you once took it to be repaired. The watch had no number stamped upon it—it was of cheap and foreign make—and he scratched your initials, J. H., inside the gun-metal back (which closes too tightly to be opened except by a skilled man), and he has identified it as yours, and will swear to it. And that is not everything ! "

" Not everything ! "

" No. Your suit ! "

" My suit ! "

" Yes, the one you wore that night—the one from which the murdered man tore a button—the one you gave to your friend, Miss Aylmer, to burn, Heggarty ! Unluckily for you, she is of a careless and slovenly turn of mind, as we have discovered since we started watching her. She only three-parts destroyed it, and the charred fragments were removed by her " daily-help," who had sufficient curiosity to examine them—and who found bloodstains, and who hesitated for a long while and then finally drew the attention of the police to them. My visit this morning was a blind—to put you off the scent while I searched here. You have been watched daily for months by Miss Goodson ! "

" By Miss Goodson ! "

" Yes, by Miss Goodson, Heggarty ! " The voice came loud, clear, and triumphant while the tricked and captured villain stared spell-bound. " By Miss Goodson, who is the deciding factor in the case, and who, more than anyone, is responsible for our suspicions and for your capture. You know her as your clerk. But let me enlighten you and present you to her. Her real name is Barbara Fielding. She is the first woman - Investigator in the Post Office ! "

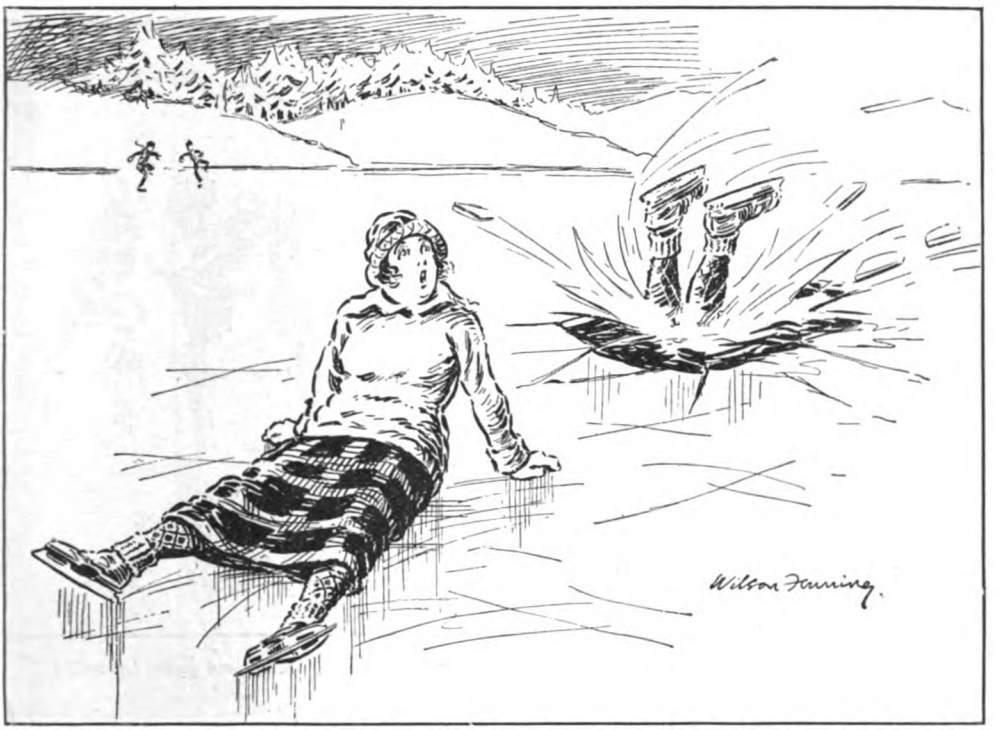
Humours of Winter Sports

Native Swiss profiting by the misfortunes of an eminent ski-er.

By permission of "The Bystander."

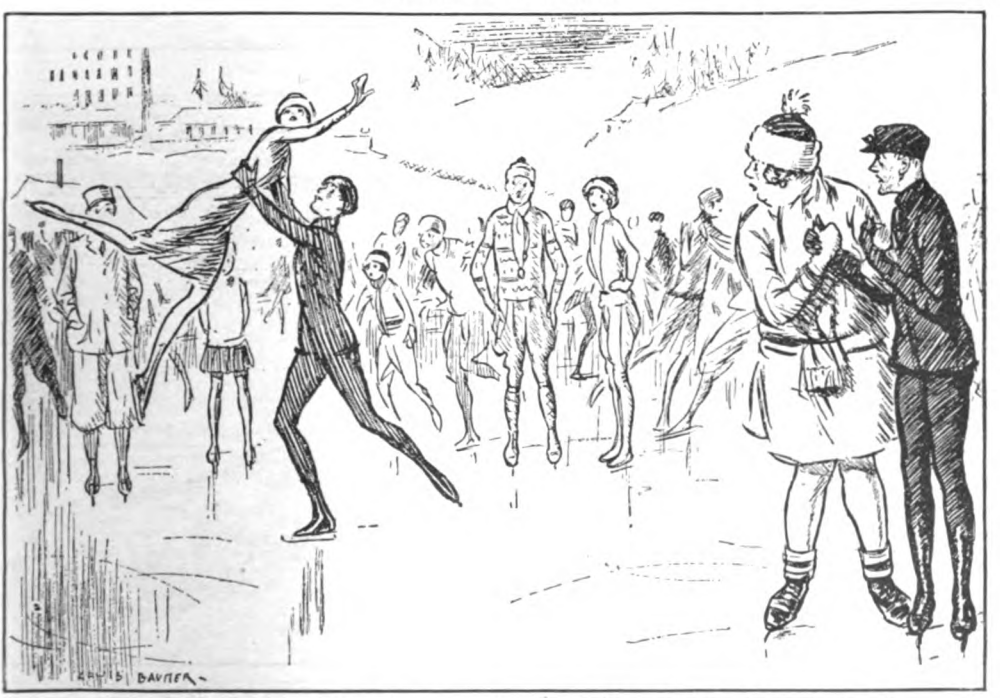
Blissfully Unconscious Maiden: "We think it will be safe enough; Harold is just having a look."

By permission of "The Humorist."



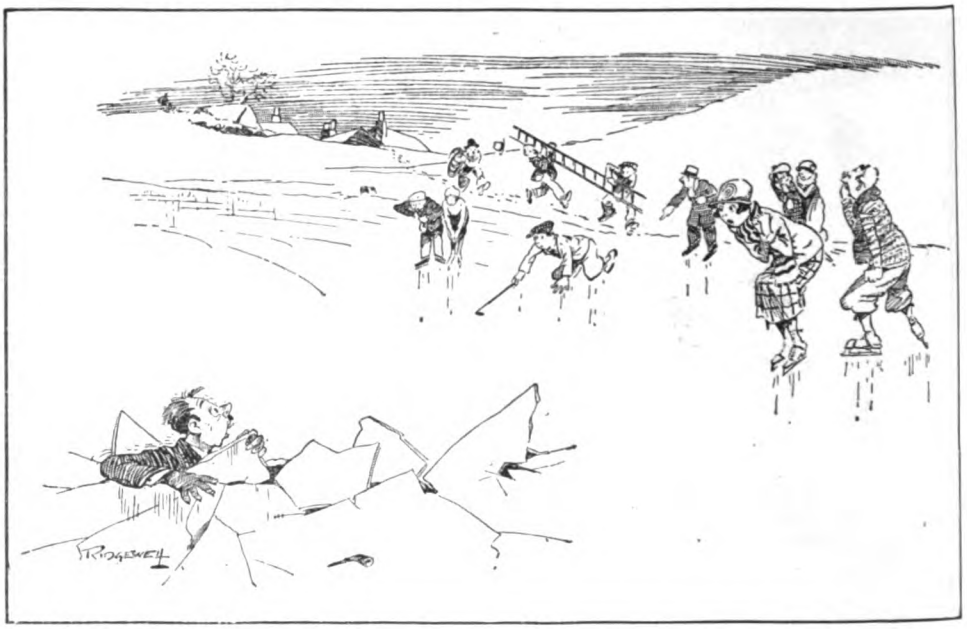
Wife (in blissful ignorance) : "Oh, John, quick—I'm sure the ice isn't safe—I can hear it cracking!"

By permission of "The Humorist."



Novice (to Instructor) : "Now, how many lessons shall I need before I can do that?"

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."



His Thoughtful Wife: "It's all right, darling, they're just coming. *Keep your jacket buttoned!*"

By permission of "The Humorist."

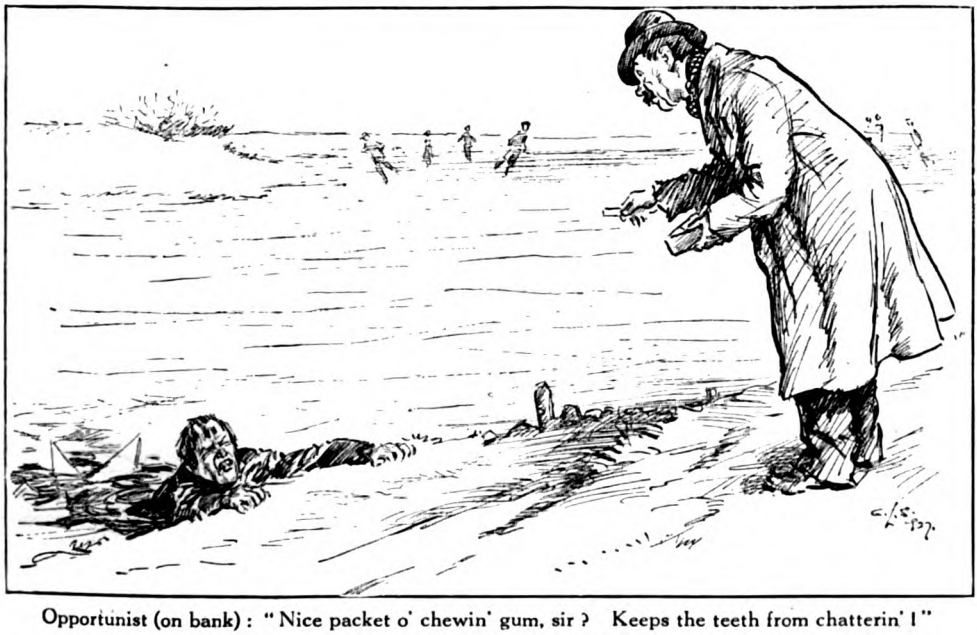
Helpful Person: "That's 'im! That's the bloke wot's fell in—'im with 'is 'and up."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

CHRISTMAS SPORTS.

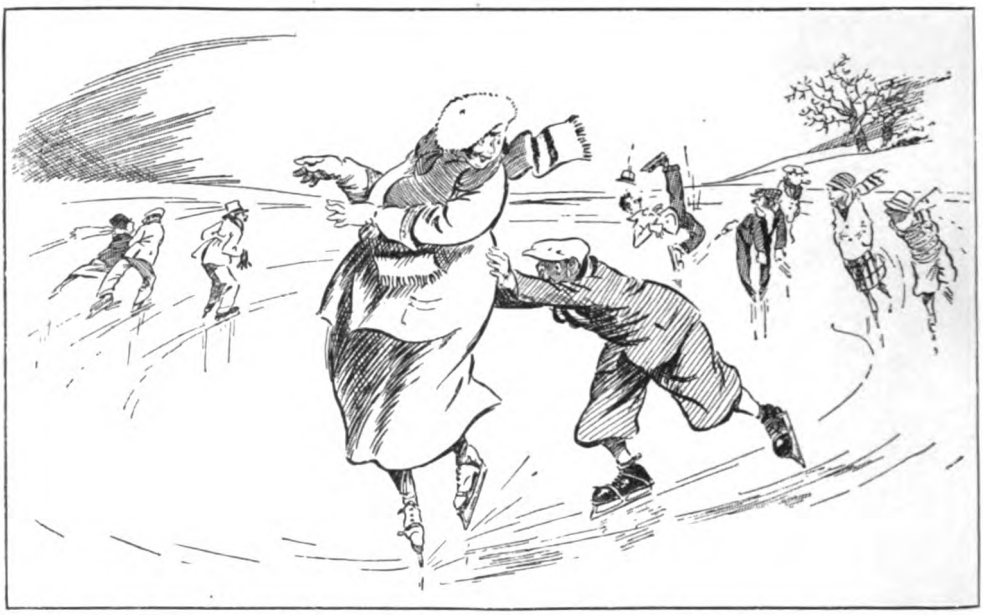
Blind Man's Buff with the Tyrolese on Christmas Eve.

By permission of "The Humorist."



Opportunist (on bank): "Nice packet o' chewin' gum, sir? Keeps the teeth from chatterin'!"

By permission of "The Humorist."



The Wife (getting on nicely): "Oh, Harold, it's glorious! I begin to imagine what the birds must feel like."

By permission of "The Humorist."

Urchin (testing the strength of the ice): "If it freezes to-night it'll be fit to skate on to-morrow."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

THE CRIME-PREVENTERS.—II.

The Indiscreet Wife

By MARTEN CUMBERLAND

Illustrated by
CONRAD LEIGH

LORETO SANTOS was beginning to tire of his stay with the Dysons. It was, in fact, rather a queer, and mixed, house-party that had gathered at "High Trees," old Dyson's newly-acquired country estate near Amerbridge, in the county of Bucks.

Winnie Dyson, of course, was all right. Winnie was a beautiful and charming little woman, besides being an old friend of Loreto's sister, Cleta. But with the majority of his fellow-guests Loreto had very little in common.

Grim old Kay Dyson—he was only fifty, but he was always called "the old man"—did not seem to care very much for his guests either. Dyson was a shrewd, hard-bitten adventurer, who as a boy had gone to South Africa, and had rapidly acquired a huge fortune.

With Kay Dyson, Loreto had two things in common: both men played chess, and both were extraordinarily fond of music. Temperamentally, however, the two were poles apart.

Loreto, despite his English education, remained always a Latin at heart. Loreto was a hedonist, gay, pleasure-loving, believing ardently in the good things of life, and in the great god Dionysus.

Kay Dyson was a stoic and a Puritan. To him all flesh was sin, and life was abundantly strewn with "Thou shalt not's!" A dour man, though honest and kind-hearted; even his love of music was confined to the early "sacred" composers, and Chopin and the Romantics were anathema.

In consequence of all this, Loreto sat in his magnificent bedroom at "High Trees" one night, and, without attempting to undress, lit a cigarette, and considered moodily how he could escape from this house of bondage.

For the first time in his life Loreto began to regret the absence of some regular and definite employment. A business and office at this moment would have been a godsend. But, as it was, he had no excuse to leave a house to which he had come for three weeks' stay, and in which he had sojourned only four days.

There came a knock at the door, and Loreto looked up gloomily as his sister Cleta entered.

"Cleta," he began, "this house-party may be exactly the thing that your young spirit craves, but to me it is a penance and a mortification of the flesh. We should have come here in Lent!"

Cleta did not heed his words. Her beautiful face was rather pale. She held her wrap about her with fingers that shook slightly, and her brown eyes were troubled.

"Loreto," she said, "I couldn't sleep, and I saw your light was still on. Winnie Dyson has been in my room, and something rather horrible has happened. Winnie has been tricked into a false position by a man who is now trying to blackmail her!"

Loreto rose to his feet quickly, and his face became keen and alert.

"Blackmail!" he echoed. "Who is trying to blackmail Winnie?"

"That foppish young man, Oswald Vidor. Winnie met him abroad somewhere, and

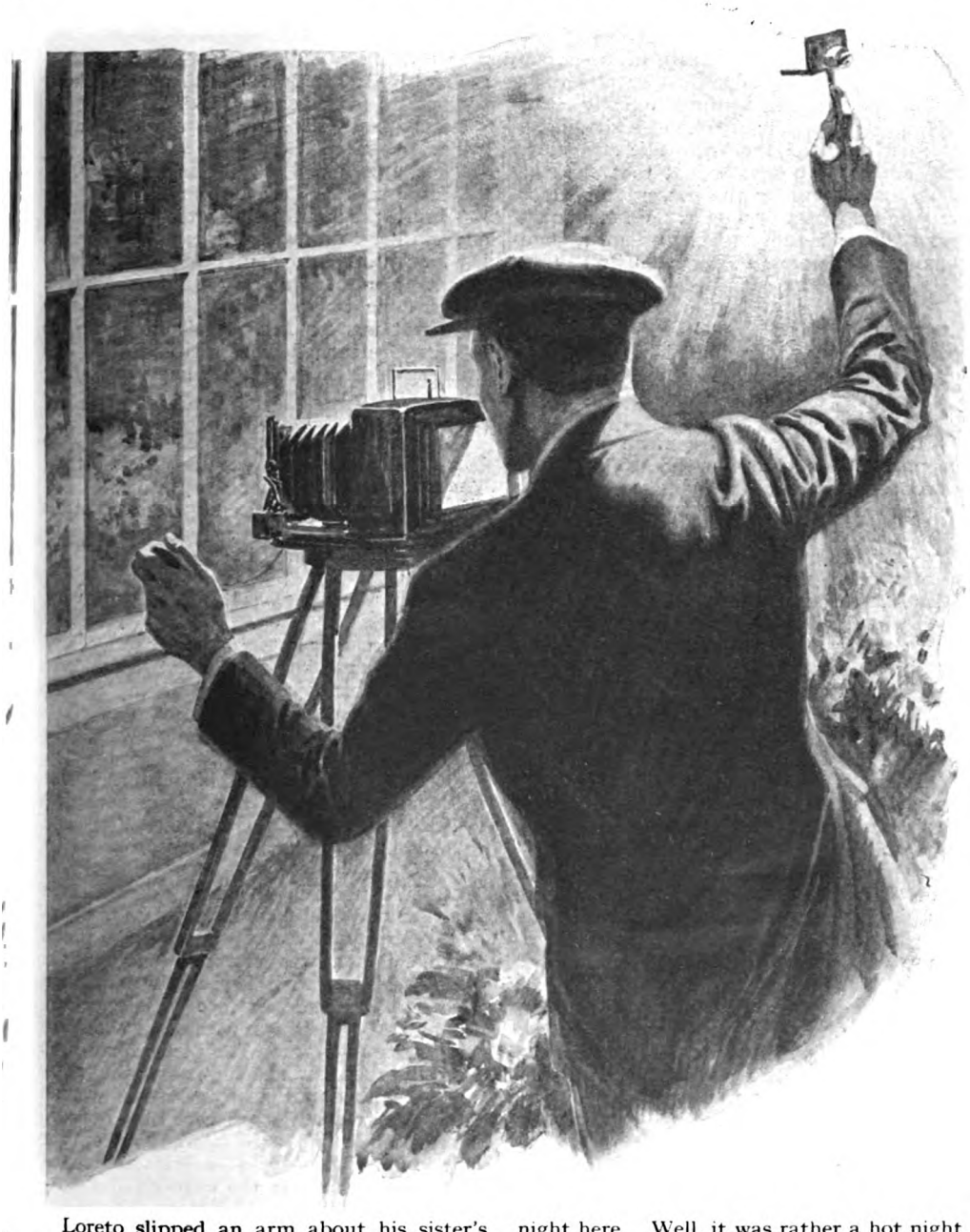
She struggled, and at that moment there was the puff of a flashlight.

asked him to this house-party without inquiring particularly who or what he was."

Loreto nodded.

"That's how most of them were asked, I should think!"

"Loreto, this is serious!" said Cleta. "Poor Winnie is in great trouble, and we simply must get her out of it. The whole thing has been a deliberate low-down blackmailing scheme!"



Loreto slipped an arm about his sister's shoulders and guided her gently into a chair.

"Let's have the story clearly, *chiquita*. I promise to do anything I can."

The girl shot a grateful look at him.

"I knew you would. Well, it happened like this. Vidor had danced with Winnie several times at the ball last Monday—you will remember the dance, it was our first night here. Well, it was rather a hot night, and Vidor led Winnie into the large conservatory—the place they call the winter garden—at the end of the ball-room. At the time the place was empty, and Winnie was a little nervous of stopping, as you know how absurdly jealous old Kay is of her."

Loreto nodded grimly.

"I do," he said.

"Well, Vidor persuaded Winnie to sit down for a moment or two near one of the doors of the winter garden looking out on to the grounds. Then, as he was talking, Vidor leaned forward quickly and, putting one arm about Winnie's shoulders, kissed her full on the lips. She struggled, but he held her easily, and at that moment there was a step near the conservatory door and the puff of a flashlight. Winnie could just make out the dark figure of a man running away across the grounds, and Vidor released her and stood up, laughing.

"'A little souvenir of a charming moment!' he said."

Loreto Santos stared at his sister, and whistled softly beneath his breath.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "An ingenious sort of swine, eh?"

"Ingenious, and utterly mean and unscrupulous," said Cleta, hotly. "Of course, everyone knows old Kay's pig-headed qualities, and his ridiculous jealousy of Winnie. She's awfully fond of Kay—Heaven knows why—but it's a fact that she's never thought of any other man, although he's twenty years older than she. I know Winnie, and I tell you she's a dear. She's high-spirited, and chooses her companions carelessly; sometimes she may even be a tiny bit indiscreet, but she never goes anywhere near too far. Kay has no real cause for his mad jealousy. He ought to know it, too, only in that way his mind is diseased."

"I know," said Loreto. "I'll accept your judgment of Winnie, and I know Kay's weakness. Well, what did Winnie do when Vidor sprang his surprise on her?"

"Do you know, she did not really realize what Vidor was up to! She thought he was playing some stupid joke, in bad taste, and she was very angry. There was no one in the winter garden, and she felt relieved the incident had passed unseen. The real significance of the flashlight photo, and the whole affair, only came home to Winnie this evening, when Vidor brought her a proof of the photo and demanded one thousand pounds for the negative!"

Loreto passed his fingers through his dark, untidy hair.

"A thousand pounds, eh? Our friend Vidor has big ideas!"

"He's clever," said Cleta. "All that foppishness is a pose. The man is a hard-faced crook, and knows exactly what he's doing. Of course, he's heard the stories about Kay Dyson's insane jealousy: how Kay has walked out of a ball-room when Winnie has been dancing and left her to come home by herself. How he's even got involved in libel actions, and so on. If Winnie were married to an ordinary man, she would just go to her husband and tell him the truth about the whole thing. As it is, she knows Kay too well even to try it; and she's so fond of him that she's ready to pay Vidor what he asks to keep that photo from her husband."

Loreto flung his cigarette into the empty grate.

"She must not do that," he said, sharply. "Winnie mustn't pay a penny."

"I told her not to," Cleta replied. "I advised her to play for time, and I assured her you would do something to frustrate Vidor. Loreto, I'm very fond of Winnie, and I hope to goodness you'll be able to do something for her. She's in a terrible state, poor dear. I would willingly pay the money myself to save her what she's going through."

Loreto shook his head.

"It wouldn't do. Blackmail is too beastly a crime to be encouraged like that. We must beat our friend somehow."

He lit a fresh cigarette and looked at his sister.

"Have you this photograph of Vidor's?" he asked.

"Yes. Winnie gave it me to show you. Here it is."

From an envelope in her hand, Cleta produced a medium-sized photograph, and Loreto took it beneath one of the electric lamps and examined it carefully.

"It is unmistakably Winnie Dyson," he muttered.

"I'm afraid so," said his sister. "Her frock alone is enough to identify her. It's a Poiret model in black and white, and there is nothing that photographs so well."

LORETO nodded. He had taken a small but powerful magnifying-glass from his pocket, and was scrutinizing the proof. Winnie Dyson was pictured leaning back upon a settee, with her small dark head thrown back, and her face plainly visible. A man had his left arm across her shoulders and was kissing her. The picture had been cleverly taken, from such an angle that there could be no doubt as to who the woman was; the man was rather less easy to identify, but his large head, long curling hair, and foppish dress—a dress that went some way to imitate the fashions of 1860—proclaimed him Oswald Vidor. The man's right hand was ornamented by a large cameo ring which Loreto recognized as belonging to Vidor.

Loreto lowered his glass with a grunt.

"H'm! They concentrated on getting Winnie's face distinctly, and they've done it. This would certainly send old Kay right up into the air."

"It would estrange him and Winnie for life," agreed Cleta, moodily. "It would

break Winnie's heart, too, and this devil Vidor knows it!"

Loreto put the photograph back in its envelope and locked it away in an attaché case.

"I'll keep that for the time being," he said. He came to Cleta's side and looked down at her affectionately.

"Cheer up, *chiquita!* We're going to beat friend Vidor, so don't you worry. It is highly probable that his own private record is not that of a Sir Galahad. There will be ways and means of dealing with him, depend on it."

He spoke cheerfully, and Cleta rose to her feet with more animation than she had shown yet. Loreto's good-looking face was keen and alert; his light grey eyes were eager, and his whole bearing inspired confidence. Cleta looked at this big brother of hers, and, remembering all the difficult cases he had brought to successful conclusions, she smiled.

"I think you will do the trick somehow," she said.

"Of course! I was bored with 'High Trees,' but this affair will give me a new interest in life. From this moment the Santos-Vidor fight is on, and may the best man win! And now run away, my little Cleta, and get your beauty sleep."

He laid a hand on her short golden hair, and kissed her lightly.

"Good night, Cletita," he said, and she went away with a smile. Loreto, however, paced his room far into the night, and he had consumed half-a-dozen cigarettes before he finally relinquished the problem, undressed, and got into bed.

THE next morning, coming late to breakfast, Loreto sat at the table with Vidor, and had an opportunity of studying his opponent.

Oswald Vidor was a tall, fair young man, dandiacal, and rather effeminate in his dress and general appearance. He wore a claret-coloured suit and a flowing cravat, while the sleeves of his silk shirt, protruding far over the wrists, had almost the appearance of ruffles. Walking abroad, he carried a long slender cane, and was always annoyed if he were mistaken for some advertising "stunt."

Despite his affectations and effeminacy, however, he was tall and sturdily built, being as broad in the shoulders as Loreto himself.

Looking at the man, Loreto could easily detect, behind his outer camouflage, the essential hardness that lay in the ugly, thin-lipped mouth, the insolent stare of the light blue eyes, and the greediness in the long, badly-shaped fingers. An expert in hands and their character, Loreto disliked Vidor's more than anything else about him. Privately, Loreto was faintly amused at the entire ignorance of human nature responsible for Winnie Dyson inviting such a shark to her house-party.

Luckily for Loreto's susceptibilities, Vidor was seated some yards away, and there was no occasion for conversation between the two men.

Vidor was talking to a stout, dark-haired woman, who, even at breakfast, was plentifully strewn with jewels. The dandiacal young man ogled her through the monocle he held in one hand, and, in a loud voice, fired off cynical epigrams that were poor things, and seldom his own.

Loreto endured it as long as he could, and then with a deep grunt rose abruptly to his feet and walked out of the room. In the Dutch garden he was fortunate enough to find Winnie Dyson alone, and he spoke to her immediately about Vidor.

"That young man is capable of anything," he said, bitterly. "I'm going up to London to look into his record."

Winnie Dyson looked at him anxiously. She was a pretty brunette, *petite* and fragile, and carrying her thirty years like a triumphant banner. At present her face was pale, and her eyes were haunted and showed signs of a lack of sleep. Nevertheless she smiled faintly at Loreto's words.

"Cleta tells me you are going to try and help me, Mr. Santos," she said. "I do hope you will be able to frustrate that awful young man. I am so worried, I'm almost inclined to pay him the money he asks, and——"

"Now, don't you think of that, Mrs. Dyson. Trust in me. Put Vidor off. Tell him you'll pay him when some dividends fall due—tell him anything you like as long as you gain time. I'm going after his blood right away. By the way, can you tell me his address? He lives in London, does he not?"

"Yes, in Curzon Street."

Loreto went to the garage, got out his car, and drove to London, a distance of only a little over twenty miles. He went straight to Scotland Yard, and there he was closeted with his friend, Inspector Comfort, for nearly half an hour.

The early afternoon found him in Curzon Street at the home of Oswald Vidor, which proved to be an expensive apartment house.

Loreto made inquiries concerning rooms.

An ex-butler was in charge of the house, and showed Loreto several suites. One, on the first floor, took Loreto's fancy, but the rooms were occupied by a young gentleman at present staying in the country, but liable to return to Curzon Street at any time.

A little finesse extracted the information that the tenant of the rooms was named Vidor.

Loreto returned to Amerbridge in a state of slight depression, the cause of which he imparted later on to Cleta.

"There seems to be nothing against this fellow Vidor," said Loreto. "At least, they know nothing at the Yard, though Comfort will investigate further. It looks to me as though Oswald is cleverer than I thought, or else he hasn't been long at this sort of game."

After dinner Loreto played a couple of games of chess with Kay Dyson, who was an opponent worthy of anyone's steel. As he played a hard-fought game, and looked at the "old man's" shrewd face, Loreto marvelled at the insane jealousy that was the one infirmity—the one slight lack of balance—in his host's otherwise well-ordered brain.

Later there was some music in the music-room, and Loreto played upon a Bosendorfer that had been specially sent from London for him. In deference to his host's peculiar and individual taste, Loreto confined himself to interpretations of Bach and Beethoven.

Just before retiring he met Winnie Dyson upon the stairs, and was giving her a few words of encouragement in a low voice when he heard a soft step upon the first-floor landing above. Looking upwards, Loreto encountered the hard, suspicious stare of Oswald Vidor, and smiled.

"Good night, Vidor," he said, cheerfully, and Vidor smiled in return.

"Good night, Santos," he drawled. "Thanks for the music. You play quite decently for an amateur. Good night, Mrs. Dyson."

The dandy disappeared from view, and Loreto's face set grimly. Vidor knew now that Winnie Dyson's cause was being championed by Loreto. The seconds were out, and the fight had really begun!

Two days later a big dance was being given by the Dysons, and an hour before dinner Loreto had a consultation with his sister.

"Listen, *chiquita*," he said. "There seems to be nothing criminal in Oswald's known record, and nothing we can use against him. I've got to get down to something more drastic. I'm going to do a little amateur burgling in his rooms to-night—you needn't be afraid, they're quite easy to enter, and I've got my story all ready, even if I'm caught. What I don't want, however, is to be caught out by Oswald himself. I want you to watch him at the dance to-night."

The girl nodded, her beautiful face alive and eager.

"I'll do that," she said.

"Good! But don't let him see you're doing it. With luck he won't notice my absence to-night—there will be a big crowd. But I want you to attach yourself to handsome, dashing Oswald, and if by any chance he should leave the dance, 'phone me at this number, which is the private 'phone in Oswald's rooms. I'll be there between ten and twelve to-night. I reckon it will take me the best part of two hours to search thoroughly."

Cleta took the slip of paper from her brother, and, memorizing the figures upon it, tore the paper in small pieces.

"I see. I 'phone this number if Vidor leaves the dance to-night. All right. I'll be close beside him from ten till midnight."

Loreto smiled.

"It is very unlikely that he does leave 'High Trees.' Wear your pearls, *chiquita*. I bet that will bring Oswald to your side all right. In any case, now he's caught poor Winnie he'll be looking for a fresh victim, and his speciality is women."

The girl laid one hand on her brother's arm.

"Do you think you'll find the negative in Curzon Street?" she asked.

Loreto shrugged.

"Frankly, I don't, but one must try everything. Oswald's unknown accomplice may have the negative, or, in any case, our friend is probably not such a fool as to conceal the thing in his rooms. However, all criminals are fools, and they all trip up on some comparatively simple point. I shall know more about Oswald to-night!"

LORETO drove to town, and had dinner at a little Spanish restaurant that he occasionally patronized. Afterwards he dropped in at a Promenade Concert, and heard a great pianist play the Saint-Saëns concerto. It was dark when he left the hall, and at ten o'clock precisely he was in a mews at the back of Curzon Street.

He knew the topography of the place very well, and he did not waste time. There was no one about, and, with a nimbleness surprising in one of his size, Loreto jumped at the edge of a low roof and caught at the gutter. A moment later he had pulled himself up and was on the roof, stealing noiselessly along the slates in his rubber-soled shoes. Below him were living rooms in which chauffeurs, their wives, and the general *personnel* of a garage lived, and Loreto moved with extreme caution.

Now he was on the top of the sloping roof, and there was a risk of being seen, for he was silhouetted against the skyline. Above him was a frosted glass window, that he knew led to Vidor's bathroom. Loreto took from his pocket a short steel instrument

Propped up against a vase upon a table in the centre of the room was a letter.

and inserted the point beneath the clasp of this window. There was a sharp click, and the window swung back on its hinge.

For a moment Loreto peered about him, then he climbed through the window and dropped lightly inside. He stood listening intently, but not a sound came to his ears. At this hour, Curzon Street and the residential quarter of Mayfair generally are extraordinarily quiet.

Loreto drew curtains across the open window, and then pulled an electric torch from his pocket, the globe of which he muffled in a silk handkerchief. A flash of the torch showed him Vidor's bathroom, with a dressing-room and sitting-room beyond.

Without hesitation Loreto went straight into the sitting-room, and then he paused, for propped up against a vase upon a

table in the centre of the room was a letter, and the letter was addressed to "L. Santos, Esq."

For a moment Loreto stared at the flourishing inscription in surprise, then he picked up the envelope, and, tearing it open, unfolded the note inside. By the light of his torch he read :—

"My Dear Santos,

"Sooner or later you will probably break into my rooms, and subject them to a thorough search. You will be wasting your time, for the thing you require is not concealed in my rooms, but, ingeniously enough, is kept circulating in His Majesty's mails.

"Please do not disturb the things in my apartments, as I have a certain regard for my poor possessions, and a horror of untidy and clumsy people.

"Yours,

"O. V."

With a mirthless smile Loreto read the note through twice before tearing it into small pieces and dropping them to the floor. He thought for a moment, and then, with a shrug, began a systematic search of the rooms. Probably the negative was not here, but Loreto was taking no chances and accepting no statement of Vidor's on its face value.

He went through those rooms with a fine comb. Books were taken from shelves and looked at page by page; pictures were taken down and examined; old papers were turned over and drawers emptied. The bedding and the coverings of chairs were pierced by a long, thin steel instrument, and every inch of the carpets was examined. The whole process took close on two hours, and when he had finished Loreto was assured that no photographic negative was concealed in any of the rooms. Also, looking at the apartments, one would have felt that Oswald Vidor's horror of untidy people was fully justified.

Loreto, in fact, left things strewn as they were, and quietly and successfully made his exit by the way he had come. Arriving at "High Trees" before one in the morning, he found the dance in full swing, and ten minutes later he had taken the floor with Cleta.

"Well?" asked the girl, as he guided her round the room.

"Nothing doing. Oswald expected me to visit his rooms."

"I thought he did. He has been mocking at me all the evening. I saw it in his eyes, the first time we danced together."

Loreto swore softly.

"Well, the thing is not over yet. I have another card or two to play."

TWO days later a very angry Vidor met Loreto half-way up the long drive that led to "High Trees." Vidor's head was bound up, and a strip of court-plaster decorated his left eyebrow. Altogether, despite the long bottle-green coat with gold buttons, and the light fawn trousers, Vidor's appearance was rather spoilt.

He came straight up to Loreto, and his face was livid.

"Damn you!" he shouted. "Not content with making a rough house of my rooms, you get your crook friends to waylay me and beat me up. All right, Santos, but I'll get level with you for this."

Loreto looked at the other calmly.

"I don't know what you mean," he said. "But your annoyance is possibly excusable, since you've evidently been fighting, and got the worst of it."

Vidor's hands gripped his elegant long cane.

"Do you deny setting those footpads on to me last night? They knocked me out as I was walking back from the village, and they searched my pockets and ripped out the lining of my clothes. Well, they didn't get what they looked for, and you won't get it! And, what's more, I'll make you pay for this, Santos, and your friends, too. The Dyson woman is scared stiff, and I can do what I like with her. And now, by God! she'll pay two thousand quid, not one thousand! That's my answer to you, Santos."

The man was beside himself with fury, and his curious light-coloured eyes were hard as steel. His leisurely drawl and refined accent had disappeared entirely. He looked what he was, a crook and a brute.

For some seconds the two men eyed one another, while the colour slowly rose to Loreto's cheeks. The one thing that always ruffled his philosophic calm was a challenge of this kind.

"Listen to me, Vidor," he said. "Mrs Dyson is not going to pay you a penny. If you push things too far, I'll get you jailed, though that sort of thing is not in my line. I don't like blackmailers, and I don't like swine that prey on women. If I had you in Patagonia, I'd serve you so that court-plaster would be useless, and your oldest creditor wouldn't know you. Now beat it!"

Again the eyes of the two men met. Vidor was trembling with fury, Loreto impassive but watchful; then, with a curse Oswald Vidor turned away, and strode off towards the house.

Loreto watched the other's going with a slow smile. Loreto's philanthropic work among "first offenders" brought him into

contact with some hard cases. The men he had set on to Vidor had rather exceeded their instructions, but Loreto was far from regretting the fact.

That same day Vidor left " High Trees," though not before he had interviewed Winnie Dyson, and threatened and bullied the poor little woman half out of her wits. Luckily, she still had confidence in Loreto Santos, and, remembering his instructions, she played for time, and spoke of money that would be due to her in a fortnight's time.

Finally, Vidor took his leave, vowing to return in a fortnight with the negative, which he, or his accomplice, would put in Dyson's hands unless Winnie paid blackmail.

After the man had gone Winnie cried a good deal, but gradually became comforted when Cleta and her brother reassured her.

The days passed tranquilly enough, on the surface. The house-party continued to amuse itself as house-parties do. Loreto practised for hours every day upon the piano old Dyson had willingly installed in his music-room. And Cleta, hearing the melodious instrument, smiled to herself, for she knew that while Loreto played his mind would be busy with the problem of Winnie Dyson's deliverance.

One day Loreto entered the drawing-room and electrified everyone with a new scheme he had for the party's amusement.

Pastoral plays and amateur theatricals were rather a bore in the general way, and Loreto proposed something new.

Why not a private film ?

He had been into the matter, and the " shooting " of a film play at " High Trees " was quite feasible. Loreto himself would write the scenario and act as producer, while all the guests should have a part, even though some of them would be very small.

Loreto had even gone to the trouble of engaging an expert camera-man to help him in his ambitious plan.

Needless to say, the proposal was greeted with great enthusiasm. They all wanted to see themselves on the films, and even old Dyson was pleased at the idea of his new estate being photographed from every angle.

Luckily the weather was fine and there was plenty of sunshine. Loreto threw himself into his new work with extraordinary energy. In an amazingly short time he had written a scenario entitled " The Romance of ' High Trees,' " and everyone was allotted a part.

Winnie Dyson, who had a talent for theatricals, was chosen as the heroine, and, after looking in vain for anything like the male actor he required, Loreto agreed to play the hero's part himself.

Cleta was the villainess, and developed an unexpected flair for sneering sardonically at poor Winnie. An athletic young man, who could ride, swim, and vault through windows, did quite well as the villain, and the minor parts and crowd work were rehearsed satisfactorily.

Bit by bit the film was produced. All the exterior scenes were taken while the sunshine lasted, and then the two or three interiors were " shot " under the direction of Loreto, greatly assisted by the camera-man. Special lights were brought down from London, and everyone agreed that Loreto must be spending a great deal upon his hobby.

Old Kay Dyson refused to take any part in the making of the film, but he became an interested spectator. The whole thing amused him, and even when he found that Loreto, as the hero, had to embrace Winnie ardently and frequently, still the " old man " did not mind. He had taken a fancy to Loreto, and for once Kay Dyson's jealousy was in abeyance.

So over a week was spent at " High Trees " in the production of a short film that amused and excited all the guests.

In this occupation Winnie Dyson seemed to shake off her usual depression and forget the threatening cloud that hung over her.

There came a day when " The Romance of ' High Trees ' " was displayed in a temporarily-rigged theatre and everyone was delighted with the picture. Loreto Santos found himself covered with a glory that he tried vainly to pass on to a deserving camera-man.

TWO days later Oswald Vidor came to the house and asked for Winnie Dyson.

Winnie was in the drawing-room at the time, looking at some " stills " of the private film, and Loreto was beside her. The woman put a hand to her breast, and looked, with white face, at her companion.

" Have him shown in here, Winnie," said Loreto, and she gave the necessary instructions to the servant.

The door opened, and Vidor, in a light grey suit, cut in his usual fantastic style, entered the room.

Seeing Loreto, the eyes of the blackmailer hardened, and his smile was fixed like the painted smile upon a mask.

" Well ? " he asked, harshly. " What is it to be, Mrs. Dyson ? Are you going to give the two thousand pounds to the charity in which I am interested ? By the way, there is a friend of mine outside who has a photograph that he fancies your husband might be interested in."

The man spoke boldly enough, and seemed very sure of himself. At the sound of his arrogant voice, Loreto felt that whatever the young criminal got, it would certainly be less than he deserved.

Winnie Dyson's face went deathly white, but she had been carefully schooled by Loreto, and she knew exactly what to do and say. Somehow she forced a smile to her lips as she lifted a series of photographs from the drawing-room table before her. "Do you know, Mr. Vidor," she said, sweetly, "I don't think it very much matters whether my husband sees your friend's photograph or not. Somehow I hardly think the picture will interest him. You see, there are so many of them in existence, and he has really seen them all."

"Well?" Vidor asked, harshly.

As she spoke Winnie held out the pile of "stills," depicting one of the principal incidents from "The Romance of 'High Trees.'" At her tone and confident smile Vidor's face went white. His lips curled back over his set teeth, and without ceremony he snatched the photographs from Winnie's hands, and looked at them one after another.

They all depicted much the same scene. It was a love scene, and the chief love scene in Loreto's film. Upon a settee, in the winter garden of "High Trees," Winnie Dyson reclined, while a broad-shouldered young man leaned over her and kissed her.

Winnie's dark head was thrown back, and there was a faint expression of surprise in her eyes, as though she had been taken off her guard. She was dressed elegantly, in a distinctive black and white frock designed by Poiret.

Winnie's face could be seen distinctly, but the face of the man who kissed her was concealed. All that one could see was a large head and long hair that curled over the collar of his coat.

The coat was cut rather in the style of a dandy of 1860, and the man's right hand was ornamented by a large cameo ring. By a singular coincidence, the man,

" What is it to be, Mrs. Dyson ? "

seen from the back at least, was exactly like Oswald Vidor in build and general appearance.

The blackmailer's hard eyes searched the photographs and examined them narrowly. Watching the man, Loreto saw that his hands were trembling, and presently he looked up and hurled the photographs to the floor.

His eyes, full of hate, went to Loreto's face.

Damn you, Santos," said Vidor. " You've beaten me, but you needn't think you've done with me altogether. I'll get you for this ! "

Loreto smiled gently, and, walking towards the door, held it open.

" Don't let us keep you, Vidor," he said, and, with a strange choking noise in his throat, Oswald Vidor turned to go.

He had almost reached the door when old Kay Dyson came into the room, with Cleta beside him.

" Winnie, my dear," said the millionaire, " is there any tea for us ? This young lady and myself are dying for a cup of tea."

He saw Vidor, and looked at him in some surprise.

" Hullo, Mr.—er——! How are you ? Come down to see us again, eh ? "

Oswald Vidor glared at him, and stalked silently out of the room, while Kay looked after the other in surprise.

" That's a strange young man, Winnie," he said, mildly. " A very peculiar young man."

" I think," said Loreto, stooping and picking a pile of photographs from the carpet—" I think Mr. Vidor is just a little upset. He's had rather a disappointment to-day."

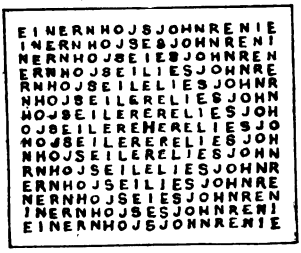
" Oh ! Well, life is like that ! " said Kay Dyson, philosophically. " Winnie, my dear, ring for tea, will you ? I'm sure it's after four o'clock."

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

890.—A MONMOUTH TOMBSTONE.

A CORRESPONDENT who has recently visited the Burial Ground attached to St. Mary's Church, Monmouth, kindly sends me this arrangement of letters exactly as it appears engraved on one of the tombstones. He would like to know in how many different ways those words, "HERE LIES JOHN RENIE," can be read, starting at the central H and always passing from one letter to another that is contiguous. I think a large number of readers will be interested in settling this question, so I will leave it for their consideration.

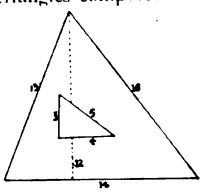


891.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

He went to the wood and caught it,
He then sat down and sought it.
Because he could not find it,
Home with him he brought it.

892.—A TRIANGLE PUZZLE.

IN the solution to a puzzle in our issue for April last I said that "there is an infinite number of rational triangles composed of three consecutive numbers like 3, 4, 5, and 13, 14, 15." I here show these two triangles. In the first case the area (6) is half of 3×4, and in the second case, the height being 12, the area (84) is a half of 12×14. It will be found interesting to discover such a triangle with the smallest possible three consecutive numbers for its sides that has an area that may be exactly divided by 20 without remainder.



893.—CHANGED HEADS.

CHANGE the head of a coin and its value is double,
While merely to add one would give you some trouble

894.—THE MOVING STAIRCASE.

SOME years ago I gave in these pages an escalator puzzle that was favourably received. Here is another on similar lines that has some interesting features.

"I counted 50 steps that I made in going down the moving staircase," said Walker.

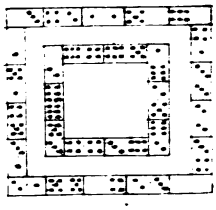
"I counted 75 steps," said Trotman, "but I was walking down three times as quickly as you."

If the staircase were stopped how many steps would be visible? It is assumed that each man travelled at a uniform rate and that the speed of the staircase was also constant.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

885.—TWO DOMINO SQUARES.

THE illustration shows how the twenty-eight dominoes may be laid out so as to form the two required squares with the pips in each of the eight sides summing to 22. With a blank in every corner the sides must sum to 21, with 22 the corners must sum to 8, with 23 to 16, with 24 to 24, with 25 to 32, with 26 to 40. Thus the constant sum cannot be less than 21 nor more than 26, because with 27 we shall require 48 in the corners and more than 47 is not possible.



886.—VARIED SPELLINGS.

HERE are nineteen variations of the sound "a." There may be one or two omissions, but if so I have not found them at the time of writing.

a (as in fate), ae (Gaelic), ai (rain), aig (Paignton), aigh (straight), ait (trait), ay (may), aye, e (end of Reveille), ê (fête), eh, ei (rein), eig (reign), eigh (weigh), et (ballet), ey (prey), eye (surveyed), eyo (eyot), et (bouquet).

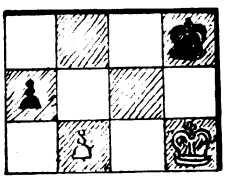
The only doubtful case here I think is "eyo" in eyot, but this is only a different spelling of "ait" and is generally pronounced the same way, though some dictionaries give the pronunciation in two syllables as "eye-ot."

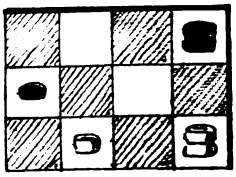
887.—THE BIRTH OF BOADICEA.

THERE were 129 years between the birth of Cleopatra and the death of Boadicea, but as their united ages amounted to 100 years only there must have been 29 years when neither existed. That is between the death of Cleopatra and the birth of Boadicea. Therefore Boadicea must have been born 29 years after the death of Cleopatra in 30 B.C., which would be in the year 1 B.C.

888.—CHESS OR DRAUGHTS.

THE position here shown in the top right-hand corner of the board applies equally to chess or draughts.





In chess the White pawn goes straight on and queens in two moves. In draughts White captures the man and then the Black king also in two moves.

889.—DIMINISHING WORDS.

THE following series of words will solve the puzzle: UNDESIRABLE, UNREALISED, LAUNDRIES, ISLANDER, SLANDER, LEARNS, SNARE, NEAR, RAN, AN, A.

APPER" (H.C.McNeile) GILBERT FRANKAU
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THE STRAND MAGAZINE

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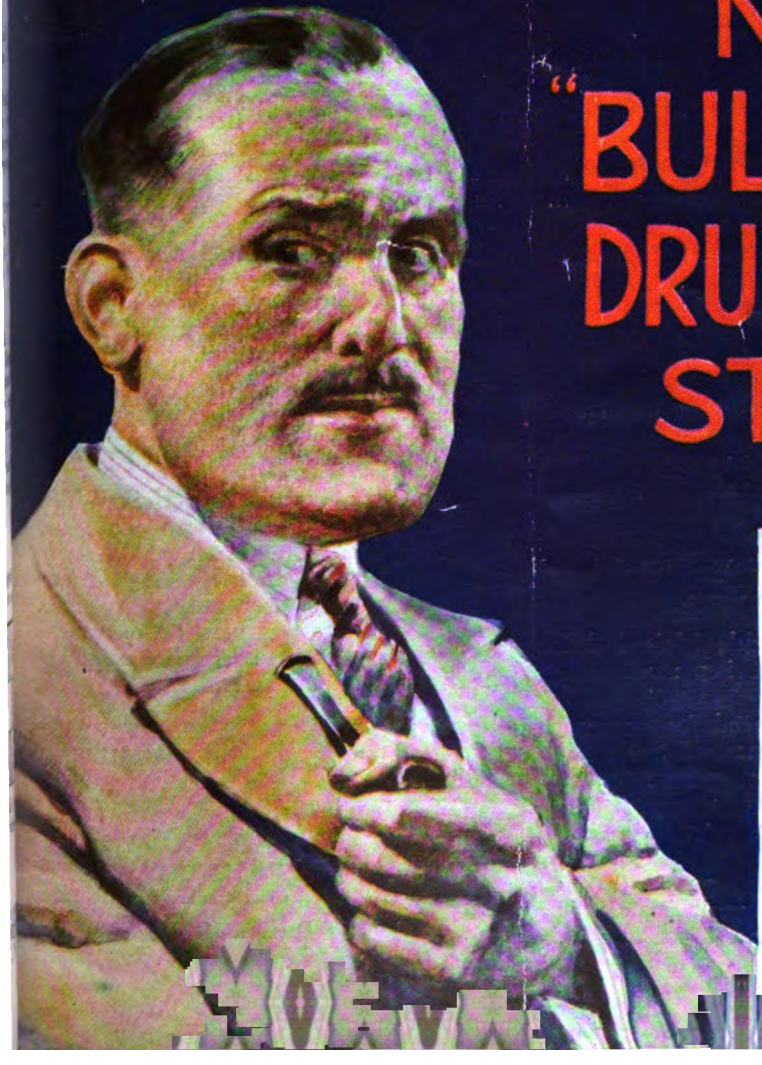
NEW "BULLDOG DRUMMOND" STORY



6 out of 8 people go down with 'Flu every Winter—needlessly

Actually the figures are 2 out of 3 men and 4 out of 5 women

* * *

Whether you have already "gone down" or not, take just that precaution which ensures you are getting *a properly balanced diet —the greatest of all necessities* at this time of the year.

The average diet is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the body because ordinary diet is not scientifically balanced. It gives nourishment but not in correct proportions. Thus, this lack of balance means that your body lacks certain elements. Such deficiency is bound to result in lowered vigour and vitality. Here lies a great danger.

The *whole* system needs building and strengthening during the severities of this wet winter. Vitality has been sapped to its lowest ebb and must be immediately replenished, if epidemics are to be resisted.

Only a balanced diet will meet these requirements satisfactorily.

That is why Horlick's Malted Milk is essential to you at this period.

It is a perfectly balanced food containing the vital elements of fresh, rich milk and cereals. It supplies in correct proportion, your body's requirements for heat, energy *and repair of tissue.*

The great vitalizing properties of Horlick's build up your powers of resistance to chill and disease, maintaining body, brain and nerve in a high state of fitness.

Don't be one of the many who go down with 'flu needlessly.

Eleven o'clock to-day is the time to start repairing the damage of winter with Horlick's Malted Milk.

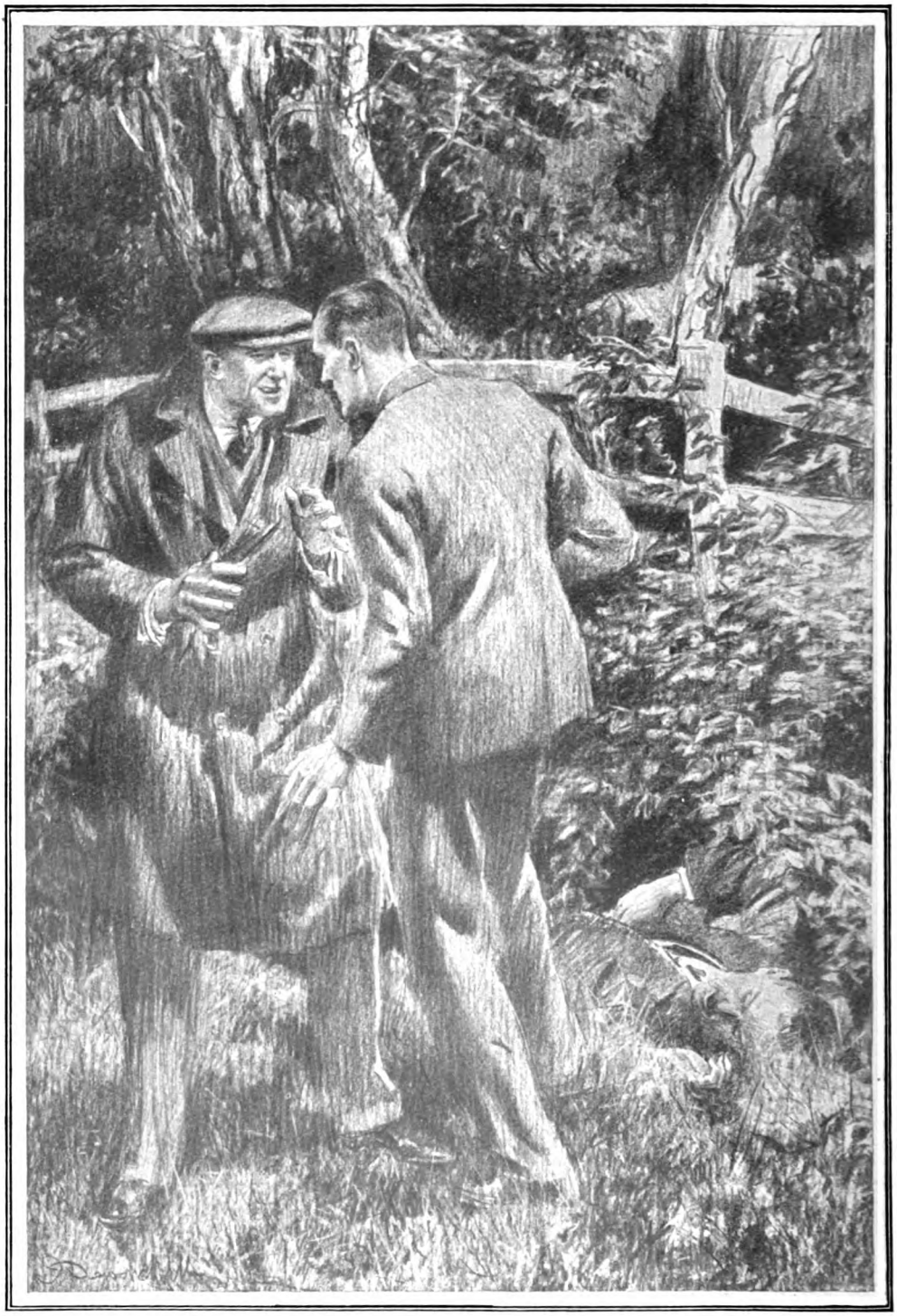
Have a glass regularly in the middle of the morning, and another glass last thing at night. Then you'll soon feel the benefit in increasing fitness and energy — greater ability to face the strain of hard work or domestic worries or an active social life—and to get through all with a smile.

HORLICK'S
FITNESS

Call for a glass of Horlick's at the nearest café, restaurant or soda fountain. Obtainable everywhere in glass bottles at 2/-, 3/6, 8/6, 15/-. Also in tablet form in glass pocket flasks

HORLICK'S MALTED MILK CO., LTD., SLOUGH BUCKS

MARCH, 1928



THE IDIOTIC CHUCKLING HAD CEASED AND THE FACE THAT WAS THRUST NEAR MINE WORE A SARCASTIC SMILE.

(See page 223.)

"THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES"

A Great New "BULLDOG DRUMMOND" Serial

THE MOST THRILLING STORY OF THE WHOLE SERIES

By "SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)

Illustrated by J. DEWAR MILLS

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH I MAKE DRUMMOND'S ACQUAINTANCE.

EVEN now, after three months' calm thought, I sometimes feel that I must have dreamed the whole thing. And then it suddenly comes over me—the events of those amazing days.

As I say, I sometimes think it must be a dream. And then I turn back my left sleeve nearly to the elbow and look at a three-inch scar, still red and angry, though it's healing nicely now. And I know it was no dream.

It was grim, stern reality, played for a stake sufficient to crack the nerve of the principal player on our side had he been possessed of nerves to crack. A game played against time; a game where one mistake might have proved fatal.

Personally, I am a peace-loving individual of mild appearance; I like my rubber of bridge at the club and my round of golf; I am not averse to letting people know that I was wounded in the leg in France. Moreover, I fail to see why I should gratuitously add the information that I was in the horse-lines at the time, and Heaven alone knows where the bullet came from. I mention these points merely to show that I am just a very ordinary sort of person, and not at all of the type which seems to attract adventure.

The truth is that I am not one of those enviable men who are at their best when in a tight corner, or when confronted with the need for immediate action.

And yet I wouldn't have missed that adventure for anything.

However, enough of this preamble. I will start at the beginning. For many years it has been my custom to spend a few days round Whitsuntide with some old friends of mine called Tracey. They have a charming house not far from Pangbourne—Elizabethan and standing in delightful grounds.

As usual, I went to them this year, arriving on the Thursday before Whitsuntide. The motor met me at the station, and having shaken Jenkins, the chauffeur, by the hand, I got in. Somewhat to my surprise, he did not at once drive off; he appeared to be waiting for someone else.

"Captain Drummond, sir," he said to me, "who is stopping at the house, came down to get a paper."

"Captain Drummond, Jenkins?" I mused. "Do I know him?"

"I think not, sir," he answered, and it seemed to me that a very faint smile twitched round his lips.

"Five to one, my trusty lad. That's better than breaking your false teeth on a plum stone."

I turned at this somewhat astounding utterance and regarded the speaker. He was still immersed in the paper, and for the moment I couldn't see his face.

"Put anything on Moongazer?"

"'Alf a dollar each way, sir," said Jenkins, so far forgetting himself as to suck his teeth in his excitement.

"You'll get your money back. Second at fours. That's not so bad for the old firm."

"Pity about cook, sir," said Jenkins, earnestly. "She don't 'old with backing both ways. Moongazer—win only—she was."

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"That sheds a bit of gloom over the afternoon, Jenkins."

Captain Drummond lowered the paper, and seemed to become aware of my existence for the first time.

"Hullo, hullo, hullo!" he exclaimed. "The new arrival. Home, Jenkins—and for God's sake don't break it to the cook till after dinner."

He got into the car, and it struck me that I had seldom seen a larger individual.

He waved a friendly hand at an extremely pretty girl on the pavement, and I took off my hat.

"Who was that?" he said, turning to me.

"I don't know," I answered. "I thought you waved at her."

"But you took off your hat."

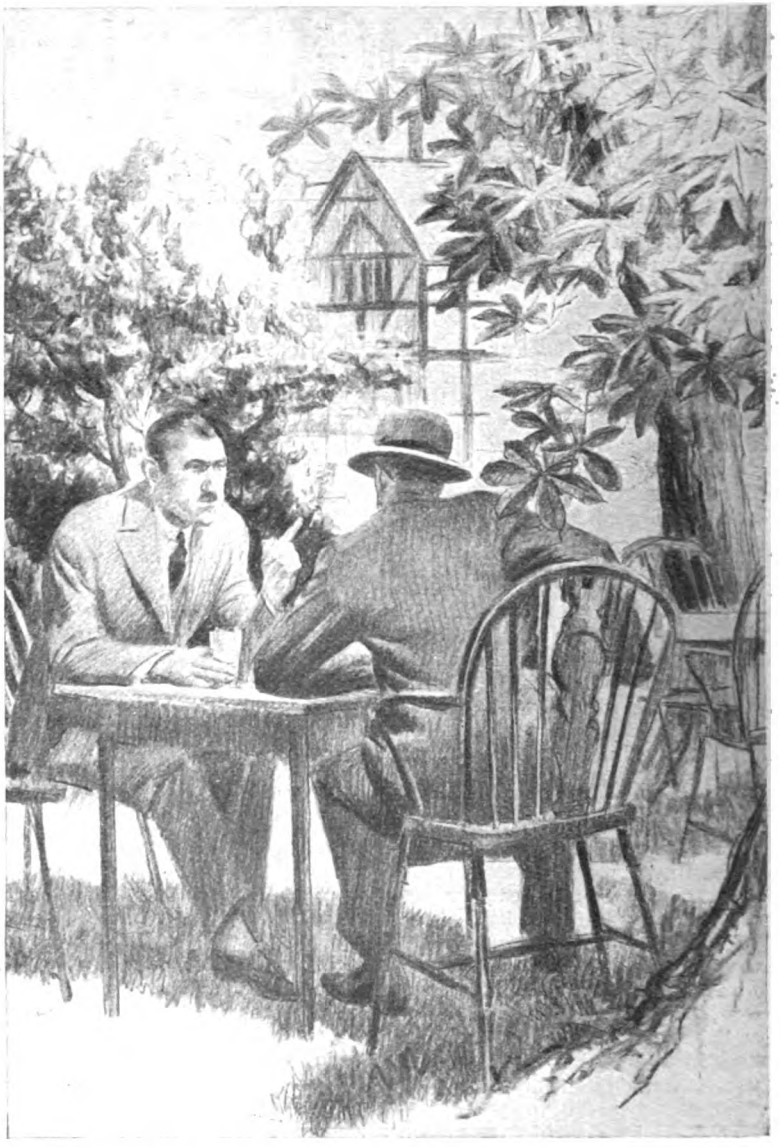
"Because you waved at her."

He relapsed into silence, while I glanced at him out of the corner of my eye. A strange individual, I reflected: one somehow I could hardly place at the Traceys'. Now that he was sitting beside me he seemed larger than ever—evidently a very powerful man. Moreover, his face was rather of the type that one associates with pugilism. He certainly had no claims to good looks, and yet there was something very attractive about his expression.

"The Cat and Custard Pot," he remarked, suddenly, and Jenkins touched his hat.

"It's nearly an hour," he said, turning to me, "since I lowered any ale. And I don't really know Bill Tracey well enough to reason with him about his. The darned stuff isn't fit to drink."

The car pulled up outside a pub, and my companion descended. I refused his invitation to join him—ale is not a favourite beverage of mine—and remained sitting in the car. The afternoon was warm, the air heavy with the scent of flowers from a neighbouring garden.



I don't know what drew my attention to them first—the two men who were sitting at one of the little tables under a tree. Perhaps it was that they didn't seem to quite fit in with their surroundings.

Foreigners, I decided. They weren't talking, but every now and then they stole a glance at the door by which Drummond had gone in. And then one of them turned suddenly and stared long and earnestly at me.

answered. " But they was 'ere when the Captain stopped for his pint on the way down. Lumme—look there ! "

I looked, and I must admit that for a moment or two I began to have doubts as to Drummond's sanity. He had evidently

Drummond was standing behind the trunk of the tree under which the men were sitting.

" Who are those two men, Jenkins ? " I said, leaning forward.

" Never seen 'em before to-day, sir," he

come out by some other door, and he was now standing behind the trunk of the tree under which the men were sitting. They were obviously quite unaware of his presence, and if such a thing hadn't been inconceivable I should have said he was deliberately eavesdropping. Then one of the two men happened to glance at me, and I suppose my face

must have given something away. He nudged his companion, and the two of them rose to their feet just as Drummond stepped out from behind the tree.

"Good afternoon, my pretties," he burbled, genially. "Are we staying long in Pangbourne's happy clime—or are we not?"

"Who the devil are you, sir?" said one of the men, speaking perfect English except for a slightly guttural accent.

Drummond took out his case and selected a cigarette with care.

"Surely," he remarked, pleasantly, "your incompetence cannot be as astounding as all that. Tush, tush!" He lifted a hand like a leg of mutton as the man who had spoken started forward angrily. "I will push your face in later if necessary, but just at the moment I would like a little chat."

"Look here," snarled the other, angrily. "Do you want a rough house, young man?"

"Rough house?" said Drummond, mildly. "What is a rough house? Surely you cannot imagine for one minute that I would so far demean myself as to lift my hand in anger against my neighbour?"

AND then the most extraordinary thing happened. It was so incredibly quick, and as far as I could tell Drummond never moved.

The two men seemed to close in on him suddenly with the idea obviously of hustling him out of the garden. There came a noise as of two hard bodies impinging together, and the gentleman who had not yet spoken recoiled a pace, holding his nose and cursing.

I sympathized with him; it is a singularly painful thing to hit one's nose hard on somebody else's head. In fact, the only completely unmoved person was Drummond himself.

"You shouldn't kiss in public places, laddies," he remarked, sadly. "It might make the barmaid jealous."

The two men stood there glaring at him, and they were not a prepossessing pair. And then the one who had done the talking drew his friend of the damaged nose on one side, and spoke to him in a low tone.

"My God, sir," muttered Jenkins to me, "the bloke with the bleeding nose has got a knife."

"Look out, Captain Drummond!" I called out. "That man has a knife."

"I know, old lad," he answered. "He's been playing at pirates. Not going, surely? Why, we've never had our little chat."

But without a backward glance the two men passed through the gate and started walking rapidly down the road in the direction of the station. And after a time Drummond sauntered over to the car and got in.

"After which breezy little interlude," he murmured, "the powerful car again swung forward, devouring mile after mile."

"Would you very much mind explaining?" I remarked, dazedly.

He grinned suddenly

"I suppose it was a bit disconcerting," he answered. "But we're moving in deep waters, laddie—or, rather, I am. And I tell you frankly, I don't quite know where I am. Why should those two blokes have followed me down here?"

"Then you have seen them before?"

He shook his head.

"No. At least, I saw them when I stopped for some ale on the way down to the station."

"But why should they follow you?" I persisted. "What's the idea?"

"I wish to God I knew," he answered, gravely. "I don't think I'm losing my nerve or anything of that sort—but I'm absolutely in the dark. Almost as much as you are, in fact."

"Of course," I remarked, resignedly, "I suppose I am not insane. I suppose there is some sense in all this, though at the moment I'm darned if I can see it."

"Presumably you read Kipling?" he said, suddenly.

"A month ago," he continued, calmly "I received this."

From his breast pocket he took a slip of paper, and handed it to me. On it some lines were written in an obviously feminine hand:—

"When the Himalayan peasant meets the he-bear in his pride,
He shouts to scare the monster, who will often turn aside.
But the she-bear thus accosted rends the peasant tooth and nail.
And the point, I warn you, Drummond, is discovered in the tail."

"It looks like a stupid joke," I said. "Do you know the writing?"

He shook his head.

"No. I don't. So you think it's a joke, do you?"

"My dear sir," I cried, "what else can it be? I confess that at the moment I forget the poem, but the first three lines are obviously Kipling. Equally obviously the fourth is not."

"Precisely," he agreed with a faint smile. "I got as far as that myself. And so it was the fourth line that attracted my attention. It seemed to me that the message, if any, would be found in it. It was."

"What is the fourth line?" I asked curiously.

"'For the female of the species is more deadly than the male!'" he answered.

"But surely," I cried, in amazement,

"you can't take a thing like that seriously? It's probably a foolish hoax sent you by some girl you cut at a night club."

"'The female of the species is more deadly than the male,'" he repeated, as if he hadn't heard my remark. "No hoax about it, old lad; no jest, believe you me. Just a plain and simple warning. And now the game has begun."

"What game?" I asked, sarcastically. "Playing peep-bo behind trees?"

He let out a sudden roar of laughter.

"You probably think I'm mad, don't you?" he cried. "Doesn't matter. The only real tragedy of the day is that the cook didn't back Moongazer each way."

Once again he relapsed into silence, as the car rolled through the gates of the Traceys' house.

"Good intelligence work," he said, thoughtfully. "We only decided to come down here yesterday. But I wish to the Lord you'd learn to control your face. If you hadn't given a lifelike representation of a gargoyle in pain I might have heard something of interest from those two blighters."

THE car pulled up at the door, and he got out.

"Little Willie wants a drink," he remarked to Tracey, who came out to greet us. "His nervous system has had a shock. By the way, where's Phyllis?"

"Playing tennis," said our host, and Drummond strolled off in the direction of the lawn.

"Look here, Bill," I cried, when he was out of earshot, "is that man all there?"

"Hugh Drummond all there?" he laughed. "Very few men in England more so. Why?"

"Well, he assaulted two complete strangers at the Cat and Custard Pot."

"Assaulted two strangers at the Cat and Custard Pot!" he repeated. "What for?"

"Ask me another," I said, irritably. "Two foreign-looking men."

"That's funny," he remarked, thoughtfully. "Rodgers—the gardener—was telling me only a few minutes ago that he had seen two foreign-looking men hanging round the house this morning and had told them to clear off. I wonder if they were the same?"

"Probably," I said. "But the fact that they were hanging round here hardly seems an adequate reason for Captain Drummond's behaviour. In fact, my dear Bill—— What's the matter?"

He was staring over my shoulder in the direction of the lawn, and I swung round. Drummond was running towards us over the grass, and there was a peculiar strained look on his face. He passed us without a word, and went up the stairs two at a time. We heard a door flung open, and then we saw him leaning out of his bedroom window.

"I don't like it, Algy," he said. "Not one little bit."

A somewhat vacuous-looking individual with an eyeglass had joined us, to whom the remark was obviously addressed.

"Ain't she there, old bean?" he remarked.

"Not a trace," answered the other, disappearing from view.

"What's stung you all?" said Bill Tracey. "Isn't Mrs. Drummond playing tennis?"

"She was—after lunch," answered Algy. "Then she got a note. Your butler wallah brought it out to her on the court. It seemed to upset her a bit, for she stopped at once and came into the house."

"Where," remarked Drummond, who had joined us, "she changed her clothes. It was a note, was it, Algy, not a letter? I mean, did you happen to notice if there was a stamp on the envelope?"

"As a matter of fact, old lad, I particularly noticed there was not."

The butler passed us at that moment carrying the tea-things.

"Parker," said Drummond, quietly, "you gave a note to Mrs. Drummond this afternoon, I understand?"

"I did, sir," answered the butler.

"Who delivered it?"

"A man, sir, whom I did not know. A stranger to the neighbourhood, I gathered."

"Thank you, Parker," said Drummond, quietly. "My God! Algy, it's quicker than I expected. Hullo! Jenkins, do you want me?"

The chauffeur touched his cap.

"Well, sir, you know you asked me to adjust your carburettor for you. I was just wondering if you could tell me when the car will be back."

"Be back?" said Drummond. "What do you mean?"

"Why, sir, the Bentley ain't in the garage. I thought as 'ow Mrs. Drummond had probably taken it out."

And if anything had been needed to confirm my opinion that this vast individual was a little peculiar, I got it then. He lifted his two enormous fists above his head and shook them at the sky. I could see the great muscles rippling under his sleeves, and instinctively I recoiled a step.

The man looked positively dangerous.

"Thrice and unutterably damned fool that I am," he muttered. "But how could I tell it would come so soon?"

"My dear fellow," said Bill Tracey, gazing at him apprehensively, "surely there is nothing to get excited about. Mrs. Drummond is a very good driver."

"Driver be jiggered," cried Drummond. "If it was only a question of driving I wouldn't mind. I'm afraid they've got her. For the Lord's sake give me a pint of ale. Yours is pretty bad—but it's better than nothing."

And then he suddenly turned on me of all people.

"If only you could have kept your face in its place, little man, I might have heard something. Still, it can't be helped, God made you like it."

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH WE FIND A DESERTED MOTOR-CAR.

WHEN I saw Captain Drummond engaged in the operation, as he called it, of "golluping his beer with zest," I was extremely angry. He, on the contrary, seemed to have recovered his spirits. No longer did he shake his fists in the air; on the contrary, a most depressing noise issued from his mouth as he put down the empty tankard on the table. He appeared to be singing, and, incredible though it may seem, to derive some pleasure from the operation. The words of his dirge seemed to imply that the more we were together the merrier we would be.

The three of them were standing in the middle of the lawn talking earnestly.

I turned to Bill Tracey.

"Have you turned this place into a private lunatic asylum?" I demanded.

And all Bill did was to shout with laughter.

"Cheer up, Joe," he said. "You'll learn our little ways soon."

"Doubtless," I remarked, stiffly. "In the meantime I think I'll go and have some tea."

I crossed the lawn to find several people I knew assembled in the summer-house. And having paid my respects to my hostess, and been introduced to two or three strangers, I sat down with a feeling of relief beside Tomkinson, a dear old friend of mine.

"Really," I said to him under cover of the general conversation, "there seem to be some very extraordinary people in this party. Who and what is that enormous man who calls himself Drummond?"

He laughed, and lit a cigarette.

"He is not communicative about himself," said Tomkinson. "And what little I know about him I have learned from that fellow with the eyeglass—Algy Longworth—who incidentally regards him as only one degree lower than the Almighty. He has got a very charming wife."

A man whose face was vaguely familiar turned and stared at me.

"Why, surely you're Mr. Darrell?" I cried. "You play for Middlesex?"

He nodded.

"I do—sometimes. But what's that you were saying about Drummond having said They've got her'?"

"Just that—and nothing more," I

"Captain Drummond isn't the sort of man to make stupid jokes of that sort," said our hostess.

He glanced round the party.

"You won't see her here," I remarked. "She has apparently taken his Bentley and gone out in it alone. Having discovered this fact, he first of all announces, 'They've got her!' in blood-curdling tones, and then proceeds to lower inordinate quantities of ale. And his behaviour coming up from the station——"

"What's that you said?"

answered. 'As I was telling Tomkinson, Mrs. Drummond has apparently gone out in his Bentley alone, and when he heard of it he said, 'They've got her.' But who 'they' are I can't tell you."

"Good Lord!" His face had suddenly become grave. "There must be a mistake. And yet Hugh doesn't make mistakes."

He made the last remark under his breath.

"It all seems a little hard to follow," I murmured, with mild sarcasm.

But he paid no attention; he had glanced up quickly and was staring over my shoulder.

"What's this I hear about Phyllis, old boy?" he said.

"The Lord knows, Peter."

Drummond was standing there with a queer look on his face.

"She got a note delivered here by a stranger. It came while I was at the station. And Algy said it seemed to upset her. Anyway she went indoors and changed, and then went out alone in the Bentley."

A silence had fallen on the party, which was broken by our hostess.

"But why should that worry you, Captain Drummond? Your wife often drives, she tells me."

"She knows no one in this neighbourhood, Mrs. Tracey, except your good selves," answered Drummond, quietly. "So who could have sent her a note here to be delivered by hand?"

"Well, evidently somebody did," I remarked. "And when Mrs. Drummond returns you'll find out who it was."

"If she ever does return," he answered.

I regret to state that I laughed.

But he still stood there with that queer look on his face.

"Peter," he said, "I want to have a bit of a talk with you."

Darrell rose instantly, and the two of them strolled away together.

"Really," I remarked, irritably, when they were out of earshot, "the thing is perfectly preposterous. Is he doing it as a joke, or what?"

Algy Longworth had joined them, and the three of them were standing in the middle of the lawn talking earnestly.

"I must say it does all seem very funny," agreed our hostess. "And yet Captain Drummond isn't the sort of man to make stupid jokes of that sort."

"You mean," I said, incredulously, "that he really believes that someone may be abducting his wife?"

"He's led a very strange life since the War," she answered. "I confess I don't know much about it myself—neither he nor his friends are very communicative. But I know he got mixed up with a gang of criminals——"

"I am not surprised," I murmured under my breath.

"I'm not very clear about what happened," went on Mary Tracey. "But finally Captain Drummond was responsible, somehow or other, for the death of the leader of the gang. And a woman, who had been this man's mistress, was left behind."

I stared at her. Absurd, of course, but that bit of doggerel at the end of Kipling's verse came back to me.

"It seems"—Mary Tracey was speaking again—"from what Bill tells me, that this woman vowed vengeance on Captain Drummond. I know it sounds very fantastic, and I expect we shall all laugh about it when Phyllis gets back. And yet——" She hesitated for a moment. "Oh! I don't want to be silly, but I do wish she'd come back soon."

AND then by tacit consent the subject dropped, and we dispersed about our lawful occasions. I didn't see Drummond, but Darrell and Longworth were practising putting on the other side of the lawn. I strolled over and joined them.

"Your large friend," I laughed, "seems to have put the wind up most of the ladies in the party fairly successfully."

"Let us hope it will end at that," said Darrell, gravely. "I confess that I have rarely been so uneasy in my life."

And that, mark you, from a man who played for Middlesex! Really, I reflected, the thing was ceasing to be funny. And I was just getting a suitable remark ready when Longworth suddenly straightened up and stared across the lawn. Bill Tracey was coming towards us, and at his side was a police sergeant. And Bill Tracey's face was serious.

"Where's Drummond?" he called out.

"He said he was going to stroll down to the river," said Darrell.

He cupped his mouth with his hands and let out a shout that startled the rooks for miles around. And very faintly from the distance came an answering cry.

"What's happened?" he said, curtly.

"I don't know," answered Bill, uneasily. "Quite possibly it's capable of some simple explanation. Apparently the Bentley has been found empty. However, we'd better wait till Drummond comes, and then the sergeant can tell his story."

We watched Drummond breasting the hill that led down to the river, running with the long, easy stride of the born athlete. And it's curious how little things strike one at times. I remember noticing as he came up that his breathing was as normal as my own, though he must have run the best part of a quarter of a mile.

"What's up?" he said, curtly, his eyes fixed on the sergeant.

"Are you Captain Drummond?" remarked the officer, producing a notebook.

"I am."

The sergeant nodded his head portentously.

"Well, sir, I have to report to you that your car has been found empty standing by

the side of the road not far from the village of Tidmarsh."

"How did you know I was here?" said Drummond, quietly.

"The constable who found the car, sir, saw your name and address printed on a plate on the instrument board. So he went to the nearest telephone and rang up your house in London. And your servant told him you was stopping down here. So he rang up at the station in Pangbourne."

"But why take all the trouble?" said Drummond, even more quietly. "Surely there's nothing very extraordinary about an empty car beside the road?"

"No, sir," agreed the sergeant. "There ain't. That's true. But the constable further reported"—his voice was grave—"that he didn't like the look of the car. He said it struck him that there had been some sort of struggle."

"I see," said Drummond.

Quite calmly he turned to Darrell.

"Peter—your Sunbeam, and hump yourself. Algy—ring up Ted and Toby, and tell 'em they're wanted. Put up at the hotel. Sergeant—you come with me. Tracey, ring up the railway station and find out if two foreign-looking men have been seen there this afternoon. If so, did they take tickets, and for what destination? Let's move."

And we moved. Gone in a flash was the large and apparently brainless ass. In his place was a man accustomed to lead, and accustomed to instant obedience. Heaven knows why I got into the Sunbeam: presumably because I was the only person who had received no definite instructions. And Drummond evinced no surprise when he found me sitting beside him in the back seat. The sergeant, a little dazed at such rapidity of action, was in front with Darrell, and except for him none of us even had a hat.

"Tell us the way, sergeant," said Drummond, as we swung through the gates. "And let her out, Peter."

And Peter let her out. The worthy policeman gasped feebly once or twice concerning speed limits, but no one took the faintest notice, so that after a time he resigned himself to the inevitable and concentrated on holding on his hat. And I, having no hat to hold on, concentrated on the man beside me.

He seemed almost unaware of my existence. He sat there, motionless save for the swaying of the car, staring in front of him. His face was set and grave, and every now and then he shook his head as if he had arrived at an unpleasant conclusion in his train of thought.

And then just ahead of us we saw the deserted car

A constable was standing beside it, and a group of four or five children were looking on curiously. It stood some three or four feet from the left-hand side of the road, so that there was only just room for another car to pass. And the road itself at this point ran through a small wood—barely more than a copse.

"You've moved nothing, constable?" said the sergeant.

"Just as I found it, sergeant."

We crowded round the car and looked inside. It was an ordinary open touring model, and it was obvious at once that there were signs which indicated a struggle. The rug, for instance, instead of being folded, was half over the front seat and half in the back of the car. A lady's handkerchief, crumpled up, was lying just behind the steering-wheel, and one of the covers, which were fastened to the upholstery by means of press-studs, was partially wrenched off. It was the cover for one of the side doors, and underneath it was a pocket for maps and papers.

THERE was something sinister about that deserted car. One felt an insane longing that the rug could speak, that a thrush singing in the drowsy heat on a tree close by could tell us what had happened. The car's head, of course, was pointed away from Pangbourne, and suddenly Drummond gave an exclamation. He was looking at the road some fifteen yards in front of the bonnet.

It wasn't until I got close to the place that I could see what had attracted his attention. Covered with dust was a pool of black lubricating oil—and covered so well that only the sharpest eye would have detected it.

"That accounts for one thing, anyway," said Drummond, quietly.

"What is that, sir?" remarked the sergeant, with considerable respect in his voice.

"I know my wife's driving better than anybody else," he answered. "And in normal circumstances if she pulled up she would instinctively get into the side of the road. So the first question I asked myself was why she had stopped with the car where it is. She was either following another car which pulled up in front of her, or she came round the corner and found it stationary in the middle of the road, not leaving her room to pass. And the owners of the car that did not leave her room to pass wanted to conceal the fact that they had been here, if possible. So, finding they had leaked oil, they tried to cover it up. Lord! if only the Bentley could talk!"

It was over in a moment—that sudden

natural spasm of feeling—and he was the same cool, imperturbable man again. And I felt my admiration for him growing. Criminal gangs or no criminal gangs, it's a damnable thing to stand on the spot where an hour or two earlier your wife has been the victim of some dastardly outrage, and feel utterly impotent to do anything.

"Do you think it's possible to track that car?" said Darrell.

"Hopeless," said Drummond, heavily. "Absolutely hopeless. Hullo! One of those kids has found something."

They were running towards us in a body, led by a little boy who was waving some object in his hand.

"Found this, governor, in the grass beside the road," he piped out.

"My God!" said Drummond, staring at it with dilated eyes.

For "this" was a large spanner, and one end was stained a dull red. Moreover, the red was still damp.

Blood! And the question which rose in all of our minds, and the question which none of us dared to answer, was—Whose?

"You don't recognize the spanner, I suppose, sir?" said the sergeant. "Is it one from your car or not?"

"I do recognize it," answered Drummond. "It's the regular set spanner I keep in the pocket with the maps and papers and not in the tool-box, because it fits the nut of the petrol tank."

"Show us just where you found it, nipper," said the sergeant, and we all trooped back to the Bentley.

"Here, sir," said the urchin. "Behind that there stone."

He was pointing to a place just about level with the bonnet, and it required no keenness of vision such as had been necessary to spot the dust-covered pool of oil to see the next clue. From the stone where the spanner had been found to a point in the grass opposite where the other car must have stood, there stretched a continuous trail of ominous red spots.

"Well, sir," said the sergeant, gravely, "it's obvious that there has been foul play. I think the best thing I can do is to get back to the station and 'phone Scotland Yard. We want a look-out kept all over the country for a motor-car containing a wounded lady."

Drummond gave a short laugh.

"Don't be too sure of that, sergeant," he remarked. "It was only my wife who knew where that spanner was kept. I should be more inclined if I were you to keep a look-out for a motor containing a wounded man!"

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH I GET IT IN THE NECK.

IT was hopeless, of course, as I think we all realized from the beginning. And for the rest of that afternoon, until long past the time for dinner, we scoured the country. Drummond drove the Bentley alone—he was in no mood for talking—and I went with Darrell.

It was in the course of that wearisome and fruitless search that I began to understand things a little more clearly. My companion amplified Mary Tracey's vague remarks, until I began to ask myself if I was dreaming. Some of the things he told me sounded too incredible.

They concerned a man called Carl Peterson, who, it appeared, had been the head of the gang our hostess had alluded to. This man was none other than Wilmot of airship fame. I, naturally, remembered the name perfectly—just as I remembered the destruction of his airship, mercifully after all the passengers had disembarked. Wilmot himself was killed—burned to death, as were the rest of the crew.

And here was Darrell, in the most calm and matter-of-fact way, stating something completely different.

"I was one of the passengers that night," he said. "I know Wilmot—or rather Peterson, as we prefer to call him—was not burned to death. He was killed by Drummond."

"Killed!" I gasped. "Good Lord! what for?"

Darrell smiled grimly.

"It was long overdue," he answered. "But that was the first opportunity there had been of actually doing it."

"And this woman knows that he killed him?" I said.

"No—and yes," he said. "She was not there at the time, but four days later she met Drummond by the wreckage of the airship. And she told him the exact hour when Peterson had died. I don't know how to account for it. Some form of telepathy, I suppose. She also told him that they would meet again. And this is the beginning of the meeting."

"So that verse was sent by her, was it?"

He nodded.

"But it seems rather an extraordinary thing to do," I persisted. "Why go out of your way to warn a person?"

"She is rather an extraordinary woman," he answered. "She is also a most terribly dangerous one. Like all women who have a kink, she is more extreme than a man would be. And I don't mind telling you, Dixon, that I'm positively sick with anxiety over this show."

Blood! And the question which rose in all of our minds, and the question which none of us dared to answer, was—Whose?

"You mean they may kill Mrs. Drummond?" I cried in horror.

"Just that and nothing more," he said, gravely. "Drummond killed her lover; she will kill his wife. She would have no more scruples over so doing than you would have over treading on a wasp. The only thing is—does it suit her book?. Is she going to try to get Drummond into her power by using his wife as a lever?"

"What sort of a woman is she?" I said, curiously.

"To look at she is tall, dark, and very *soignée*. She's handsome rather than pretty, and I should think has some Southern blood in her. So much for her appearance. Her character is a thing to stand aghast at. She has the criminal instinct developed to its highest degree; she is absolutely without mercy; she is singularly able. How much, of course, was her and how much Carl Peterson in the old days is a thing I don't know. But even if it was him principally, to start with, she must have profited considerably by seeing him at work. She must be a very wealthy woman. Peterson's life was not a wasted one as far as other people's money was concerned."

"It sounds a tough proposition," I murmured.

"It is," he agreed, gravely. "A damned tough proposition. In fact, Dixon, there is only one ray of sunshine that I can see in the whole business. To do them both justice, in the past they have never been crude in their methods. In their own peculiar way they had a sense of art. If that sense of art is stronger now with her than her primitive desire for revenge, there's hope."

"I don't quite follow," I said.

"She will play the fish—the fish being us. To kill Mrs. Drummond offhand would be crude.

"Of course," he went on, thoughtfully, "I may be wrong. If so—it's hopeless from the start. They've got Drummond's wife; if they want to they can kill her right away. But somehow or other——"

He broke off, staring at the road ahead. The light was of that half-and-half description when head-lamps are useless and driving is most difficult.

He touched the accelerator with his foot.

"What's that dark thing there beside the road?" he said. "It's a car right enough, and you never can tell."

We drew up beside it, and the first thing I noticed was a pool of lubricating oil in the road, under the back axle. Only a coincidence, of course, I reflected, but I felt a sudden tingle of excitement. Could it possibly be the car we were looking for?

We got out and walked up to it; the car was empty—the blinds of the back windows drawn down. "We'd better be careful," I said, a little nervously; "the owner may be in the field."

"On the other hand, he may not," said Darrell, coolly, and opened the door.

IT was an ordinary standard limousine, and at first sight there seemed nothing out of the normal to be seen. There was no sign of disorder, as there had been in the Bentley. The rug on the seat was carefully folded, and it was almost mechanically that I opened one of the back doors, to stand nearly frozen with horror at what I saw. The covering of the front bucket seat beside the driver's was saturated with blood from the top right down to the floor boards.

"Good Lord!" I muttered, "look here!"

Darrell came and looked over my shoulder, and I heard him catch his breath sharply.

"This evidently," he remarked, "is the car we are after. There's a torch in the pocket of the Sunbeam; get it, like a good fellow."

By its light we examined the stain more closely. The average width was about six inches, though it narrowed off towards the bottom. But one very peculiar point about it was that near the top were a number of strange loops and smears, stretching away out of the main stream. They were the sort of smears that a child might make who had dipped its fingers in the blood and had then started to draw patterns.

"The person who sat in this seat must have bled like a pig," said Darrell, gravely. "From a wound in the head, obviously."

Whose head? Who was it who had sat in the seat? Once again the same ghastly question, unasked and unanswered save in our own minds. There seemed no doubt who it was who had sat in that seat. And I felt thankful that Drummond wasn't there with us.

"What do you make of it, Dixon?"

Darrell's voice cut into my thoughts.

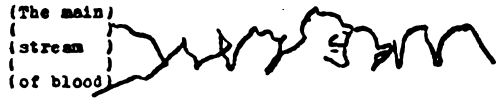
He once more switched the torch on to the stained cover.

"You know," he said, "those loops and smears puzzle me. What on earth can have caused them? What possible agency can have made that stream of blood divert itself like that? Hold the torch a moment, will you? I'm going to copy them into a notebook."

"My dear fellow," I remarked, "what on earth is the use? Do it if you like, but I should say that the best thing we can do is to make tracks for the nearest police-station and give them the number of this car. We want to find out the owner."

"It won't take a moment," he said, "and then we'll push off. There—is that about right?"

He handed me his rough sketch; a copy of it is before me as I write:—



"Yes," I remarked, "that's pretty well how it looks. But I'm afraid it's not going to help us much."

"You never can tell," he answered. "Those marks didn't come there accidentally—that I swear. It's a message of sorts; I'm certain of it."

"It may be a message, but it's absolute gibberish," I retorted. "Now don't you think we'd better push on to a police-station. I've got the number of this car—ZW 3214."

He looked at me thoughtfully.

"Can you drive my Sunbeam?" he said.

"I blush to admit it," I answered, "but I'm one of those extraordinary people who have never driven a car in their life."

"That's a pity," he remarked, "because I was going to propose that I stopped here while you went. I think one of us ought to remain, in case anything happens."

"Good Lord!" I said, "hasn't enough happened already? However, I don't mind staying. Only get a move on; I'm beginning to feel like dinner."

He got into his car, and in half a minute was out of sight.

I lit a cigarette—quite unaware of the horror with which Drummond would have viewed such a proceeding. To see and not be seen, to hear and not be heard, was a dictum of his I was to learn later.

All sorts of weird whispering sounds came to my ears as I stood there beside the car. And once I gave a terrific start as a shrill scream came from the field close by.

"An animal," I reflected, angrily. "A rabbit caught by a stoat. Don't be such a damned fool."

I ground my cigarette out with my heel and stared down the road. Surely it was about time for Darrell to get back. And as I stood leaning against the bonnet, a bird got up with a sharp cry from a point in the hedge some hundred yards away.

And then a twig cracked. I heard it distinctly and stiffened. Another—and yet another, whilst I stood there motionless peering into the darkness. Did my eyes deceive me, or was there something dark moving cautiously along the grass beside the road, in the shadow of the hedge?

I listened again: all was silent. The stealthy mover, if there was a mover, was moving no more. My imagination, probably, and with a shaking hand I extracted my cigarette-case. Lord! what was there to be frightened at?

"Lawks' sakes—look at this 'ere!"

The voice came from the hedge not ten yards away, and in my fright I dropped my case in the road. Then with an effort I pulled myself together; to be frightened at my time of life by a mere yokel was not good for one's pride.

"Look 'e 'ere, mister."

"Where are you?" I said. "I can't see you."

The fellow gave a cackling laugh which made me think he was not quite right in his head. And then came another remark which caused me to start forward in horror.

"A dead 'un."

"Where?" I said, thickly, and then I saw him just in front. His back was towards me and he was bending over something that lay in the ditch close to the hedge. He was chuckling to himself in an idiotic way, and I heard a voice croak at him: "Darn you! Shut up." It was my own.

I reached his side, and bent over too. And for a moment or two I stood there staring, hardly able to believe my eyes. True, a body was there, lying in that peculiar twisted position which tells its own tale. True, there was a terrible wound in the head, clearly visible even in the darkness. But it was not a woman. It was a man. And the feeling of relief was stupendous.

I turned to the yokel foolishly, turned and froze into immobility. The idiotic chuckling had ceased and the face that was thrust near mine wore a sarcastic smile.

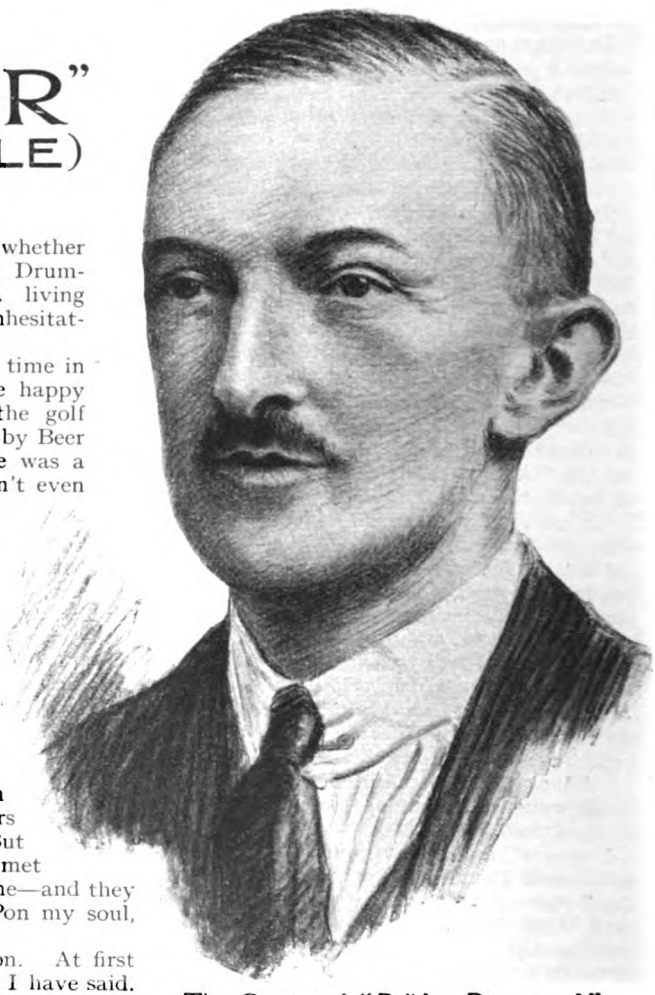
"Too easy," he remarked.

A pair of hands fastened on my throat, and I began to struggle desperately.

(To be continued.)

ALL ABOUT "BULLDOG DRUMMOND"

By "SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)



The Creator of "Bulldog Drummond"—"Sapper" (H. C. McNeile).

I HAVE often been asked whether the character of Bulldog Drummond is founded on a living man. The answer is unhesitatingly—No!

He was actually born some time in April, 1919. The scene of the happy event was the club-house on the golf links at Nairn: the parentage by Beer out of Tankard. At first he was a weakly child; in fact, he wasn't even christened for some time. He remained a nebulous conception—a vague being who had fought through the War and found peace a tedious occupation. And here let it be said that there were many such. Foul though the War was—and I don't think anyone can accuse me of painting it otherwise—it did, in some strange way, get hold of one. Perhaps it was that when a man has done a thing for four years it tends to become a habit. But the fact remains that I have met many men who have said to me—and they were not talking for effect—"'Pon my soul, I wish I was back in France."

However, that is a digression. At first Drummond remained vague, as I have said. He began to crystallize after the event which I gave in a symposium which appeared some time ago in THE STRAND. It may best be alluded to as the Case of the Man who Sniffed when he played Golf. Here are the words in which I described it:—

"I WAS sitting in a certain club-house in Scotland one evening in the early summer of 1919. I had just finished a round of golf with a man I had never met before, and who, I devoutly prayed, I should never meet again. He was, without exception, the most unpleasant individual I had ever encountered. He had grumbled and groused the whole way round the links; he had delivered himself of hoarse noises on

the green just as I was putting; and he deliberately cheated in at least one bunker. In addition, Nature had endowed him with a permanent sniff.

"Still, he was a member, and I was not, so I had endured my agony in silence, resolving only that sooner than play with him again I would flee the country.

"It was at that moment that a man I knew slightly came in and asked me with whom I had been playing. I told him, and he looked pensively out of the window.

"'During the War,' he said, 'I killed, to the best of my belief, two Germans—an action, they tell me, of merit. But if, during the peace, I killed your opponent of this afternoon, it would not be an action of merit. In fact, they would probably hang me. Why?'

"The question was unanswerable. Why, indeed? The contention that man must live, however obscure the necessity, cannot surely apply to a person with a permanent sniff. The suggestion is an outrage on common sense. And suddenly it struck me how wonderful it would be if a society could be formed for the extermination of unpleasing individuals. I mean there had been at least two moments that afternoon when, had I possessed a lethal weapon, I would have shot my opponent and then jumped on his face with nailed shoes. Only a dream, of course, an ecstatic dream—and then it dawned on me. True, I should never be able to kill that man in reality: I would do it in imagination. And thus was Bulldog Drummond born.

"Every one of the twenty-three—or is it thirty-three?—men that Bulldog Drummond has killed up to date is really my opponent of that afternoon. And I hope he sees this, and recognizes himself, and dies in terrible agony out of sheer fright. He won't, of course. He'll only sniff once again, and wonder who the man can be—curse him!"

I make no bones about it: in spirit I am a murderer. Had it not been for the ridiculous rules that govern society to-day I should have killed that man. Slowly and lingeringly I would have changed the Chinese Death from a Thousand Cuts into Death from a Thousand Niblick Blows, varied with a few rich and fruity swipes delivered with a heavy brassie. And then I'd have danced on his body and screamed with joy. But there you are! These rules may be ridiculous; the fact remains that I had, and have, a rooted objection to being hanged. And though I have since consulted a golfing lawyer of repute who told me that no jury would ever have convicted in the circumstances, at the time I didn't know it. Thus did my nebulous conception begin to have some purpose in life. If archaic institutions restrained me from murder, nothing of that sort should hinder him. The only point he would have to consider was whether the victim really deserved it. A professional poisoner, say, or a man who tortured children, or sniffed at golf.

And from that moment Bulldog Drummond began to put on weight. It was obvious, of course, that his sole *raison d'être* must not be killing people; but I was determined that he should be allowed to if he liked. Therefore he must be a man of great physical strength, extremely quick on his feet, and a fine shot. Then a delightful girl with whom I was discussing the matter said, "Of course, you *must* make him ugly. I adore ugly men." She stared at me as she spoke, and, dash it all, I rather thought until then that she liked *me*. Or did she mean? However, I seem to be getting involved. The decree had gone forth, and ugly he became. And the only other point of possible interest about him concerns his beer-drinking propensities. On this matter I will touch lightly—as with a feather. I am given to understand that it is permissible to endow on a character some slight idiosyncrasy of the author. Let us leave this rather painful subject at that, and pass on.

OBVIOUSLY the next thing to do was to find some victims for our hero, victims worthy of his steel. And so there emerged Carl Peterson, Irma, and Henry Lakington in their house at Godalming. (I was once asked, "Why Godalming?" My only answer was, "Why not?" That closed the conversation.) And the next thing was their particular form of villainy. Here let me for a moment become serious. At that time the spirit of unrest was abroad in the country. It was not to be wondered at. A land fit for heroes to live in had been painted in glowing colours, and behold! the change, if any, was for the worse. Troubles over demobilization were rife; men were discontented; the soil was ripe for the agitator. And believing firmly as I did, and still do, that ninety per cent. of such agitators are concerned with their own pockets, and care no whit for their wretched dupes; believing firmly as I did, and still do, that there is no crime more foul than that of a man deliberately preaching what he *knows* to be untrue to his intellectual inferiors in order that he may benefit financially out of their sufferings, I decided to make Carl Peterson an Arch Communist.

Lakington, on the other hand, I kept as a master burglar. I did not want to make the book entirely political. Then came Phyllis, and Drummond's bunch of friends

to counterbalance Peterson's gang. And at the end my bad mistake—Drummond's marriage.

Frankly, I did not think that a kindly public would take my hero so much to its heart as it has. I never really intended to write a sequel. If I had I wouldn't have married him so soon. In fact, there have been times when I have thought seriously of putting in a small preface: "It is deeply to be regretted that Phyllis Drummond passed away peacefully in her sleep. She never recovered consciousness after the appalling catastrophe which took place when she and her husband were staying with her uncle, the Bishop. True to his invariable custom, her husband insisted on drinking beer at breakfast, a habit which she feared might upset the venerable prelate. She therefore gave orders that it should be brought in a teapot, and informed her relative that her husband took neither milk nor sugar. All would have been well but for the fact that the butler, a man of low mental order, placed a tumbler beside the teapot.

"Her successor is Daphne, who, I hope, will give every satisfaction."

But the play was the fun. Quite by chance I saw a newspaper cutting—I don't even remember the paper—which said how nice it would be to see Sir Gerald Du Maurier as the strong and ugly hero. Having had the pleasure of making Sir Gerald's acquaintance during the war, I at once wrote to him to find out his ideas on the subject. His reply was characteristic: "I don't know that I can do the strong part of it—but fire ahead."

So I wrote a play. I was very proud of that play. I thought it a very good play. I tried it on the dog—I mean I read it to my wife—and somehow or other I don't think she did think it was a very good play. However, nothing daunted, I hied me to London, and there I read it to Sir Gerald. And when I was reading it to Sir Gerald I, too, began to wonder whether it was a very good play.

Then I waited his verdict. He said:—

"Would you like some beer?"

I said, "Thank you." (Pause.)

He said, "Would you like some more beer?"

I said, "Thank you." (Long pause.)

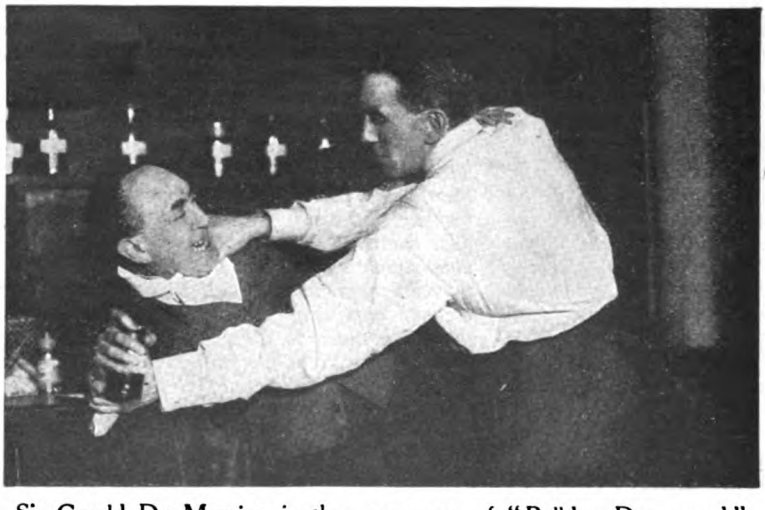
He said, "You know, you've got a splendid line in that play. It's the one—I think it's at the beginning of the first act—where the servant says, 'Very good, sir.'"

However, thanks entirely to Sir Gerald, it finally appeared. It weathered the coal strike, or was it the railway strike?—at any rate, one of our annual strikes that are so helpful and comforting—and ran for a year. Moreover, it contained that splendid line of mine. I insist on that.

But to return to the books. Bulldog Drummond makes his fifth bow to the public in this issue of THE STRAND. As those kindly readers who have followed his fortunes up to date will probably remember—Carl Peterson is dead. I wish he wasn't. Honestly, I liked Carl. But since he has been poisoned and burned to ashes, I cannot disguise from myself the sad fact that he is very dead indeed. And so his mantle has descended on Irma. Hence the title:—

"For the Female of the Species is more deadly than the Male."

So said Mr. Rudyard Kipling, and who am I to contradict him? All that I could do, in my humble way, was to try to prove he was right. And if I have succeeded or if I have failed, I can honestly say one thing: I think "The Female of the Species" is the best of the series. No, that's wrong. I think it is the least bad.



Sir Gerald Du Maurier, in the name part of "Bulldog Drummond," at grips with "Henry Lakington."

Lalage Laughs

By

EDGAR JEPSON

Illustrated by
JOHN CAMPBELL

MRS. MEDMENHAM — dropping everything they can, the polite pronounce it Mednam—one of those slight, frail-looking, big-eyed, soft-voiced women, who are really fitted with nerves and muscles of the best copper and rule everyone they can reach with a rod of Bessemer, looked up from *The Times* newspaper, took a delicate sip of coffee from her old Sèvres cup, gazed thoughtfully at her son Bob, who was quaffing an outsize cup of common porcelain —she often said that to see Bob eat and drink was as good as taking a meal herself —and with a hopeful sparkle in her eye said:—

"I wonder whether this man could help us? Listen." She again turned her eyes to *The Times* and read: "Obstacles removed. L. Smith, 99, Henrietta Street, W.C.2."

"The Fitzhugh-Lennoxes are certainly obstacles. But are they the kind of obstacles L. Smith removes? It sounds like one of those contractor jossers," said Bob, in the respectful tone of one who knew all that was to be known about that rod of Bessemer; and he helped himself to three more fried eggs and four more slices of bacon.

"It's quite worth looking into. And I'm determined to leave no stone unturned," said his mother, firmly.

This was inaccurate. She was determined that no one she could reach should leave any stone unturned.

And she added: "You had better go down directly after breakfast and see this Mr. Smith on the chance of his being able to do something. He may be able to get those Briggs people out."

She always spoke of the Fitzhugh-Lennoxes as "those Briggs people," because Briggs had been their pre-munition name. Fitzhugh-Lennox was a happy afterthought, born of prosperity.

"Very well," said Bob; and he sighed.

He had intended to play lawn-tennis that bright, sunny morning. Then his face grew cheerful again as he remembered that Henrietta Street was no distance from the Sports Club, of which he was a young but ardent member, and he could go there and play billiards. It made but little difference to him what game it was so long as he was playing it.

Three-quarters of an hour later he found that the office of L. Smith was an attic in what had been a commodious residence in the eighteenth century and was now a nest of offices. The brass plate on the door was brand-new, as was the little brass knocker above it. He knocked; the door opened; and he found himself looking down on an uncommonly pretty girl. He looked down on most people, not from any proud sense of his superiority, but because he stood six feet three in his socks.

"I want to see Mr. L. Smith," he said.

"I am L. Smith," said the pretty girl. "Did you wish to consult me?"

Bob was taken aback. He had expected to find L. Smith a prognathous business man with his hair dressed *à la Pompadour*. He looked at the pretty girl again earnestly, and perceived that there was a great deal to be said for her clear brown eyes, also for her nose, though it was a trifle tip-tilted, and her very red lips, which were uncommonly kissable, and her brown hair, which looked uncommonly strokable. Certainly he wished to consult her. Anybody would.

"It's what I came for," he said, with decision.

"Come in," she said, then added in a businesslike, but musical, voice: "I suppose you want an obstacle removed. You'd

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better tell me all about it from the beginning; and I'll ask you anything I want made clear as you go along."

She drew a note-pad towards her and took up a pencil.

"Right," he said, and frowned, marshalling his facts. "It's like this," he began. "My name's Mednam——" He spelt it—he generally had to spell it—and she wrote it down. "Robert Challenor Chard Mednam. We have, or rather we had, a property in Berkshire—Mednam Grange. The entail was cut off in my grandfather's time. He had rather made ducks and drakes with his money, you know. My father managed to stick on; but when he died ten years ago the Grange and most of the property was sold. We only kept the dower house and the meadows round it. My mother lets it for most of the year. It pays for the rent of her house in Adelaide Gardens. Then, just a year ago, my great-aunt Elizabeth died. She had a lot of money from my great-grandfather. And she left me a hundred and forty thousand pounds. Now my mother wants the Grange back. She wants me to take my place in the county. Do you follow all this? It's rather complicated."

He ended on an apologetic note.

"Perfectly, thank you," said Miss L. Smith; and she smiled at him indulgently.

He smiled at her, an ingenuous, boyish smile, quite as attractive as her own, and went on: "Well, here's where the obstacle comes in. Eighteen months ago the Fittleworths, who bought the Grange when my father died, sold it to a man called Fitzhugh-Lennox, one of those rich munition merchants. Of course, it isn't his real name. His real name is Briggs—Bonny Briggs his munitioneers called him, because he isn't. And he won't sell it. We've offered him the stiffest price. But it's no good. He's bent on being a country gentleman; and the Grange just suits him. He's the obstacle to our going back; and we want him cleared out."

She nodded her head and frowned thoughtfully; then she said: "What kind of a man is he?"

"Rather hot stuff, I'm told—from the business point of view, you know—hard-headed and that kind of thing. And of course he's awfully bucked at getting hold of the Grange."

"I see," she said, gravely, and once more puckered her pretty forehead in earnest consideration. Then she added: "He doesn't sound the kind of man with whom gentle measures would be of much use."

"Not at all the bird to be wangled out of it," Bob admitted.

"What is his family like?" she said.

"There's a son—about my age—a bounder—stayed in the factory office all through the war—one of the famous old Xth Indispensables. And there are two girls—on the noisy side. I saw them at the Carlton the other night. Mrs. Briggs was with them, a big, horse-faced woman, hard as nails," said Bob.

"And now tell me all about the Grange itself. Is it easy to get at? I don't mean by train, but when you're there?"

"Rather. The home wood runs to the edge of the gardens and then there's the shrubberies. They run right to the house. And it's one of those old Jacobean houses, with passages in the panelling and a priest's hole just under the roof; and there's an underground——" He stopped short and added quickly: "But that's a secret. I mustn't tell you about that."

"But indeed you must. You mustn't keep anything from me any more than you would from your doctor. I *am* a doctor of sorts, you know," she said, earnestly.

"Oh, well, I don't know why it should be a secret. But my mother didn't tell even the Fittleworths about it; and they were old friends. There's an underground passage right from the dower house to the Grange. It brings you right to the foot of the staircase that runs up to the priest's hole."

"An underground passage! In this age! In the twentieth century! Not working?"

"Oh, yes, it is. At least it was six years ago. And I can soon get it in working order again," he said.

"It sounds incredible," she said. "And the Fitzhugh-Lennoxes don't know of it?"

"No," he said.

"Do you know, I think that passage may turn out very useful," she said, and looked at him with dancing eyes and a smile of ineffable mischief.

He liked that smile. It seemed to bring her closer to him, in a kind of comradeship.

"WELL, I must think it over," she said. "I think that, with that secret passage to help, I ought to get two or three useful ideas quite quickly. Could you come again this afternoon about four?"

A happy thought came to him; and he said: "Couldn't you come to tea with my mother at five this afternoon and talk it over with her? She's uncommonly cute, my mother is."

"Yes. That's a very good idea. I will," she said.

His task was performed; but he felt no inclination whatever to go. In fact, he wanted quite distinctly to stay. He wanted to look at Miss L. Smith's pretty face for

"My name's Mednam——" He spelt it—he generally had to spell it—and she wrote it down.

quite a while longer; also he wanted to know more about her—lots more. He asked her politely how business was. Then he remembered that they had not discussed the matter of fees. He became business-like in his turn and asked her what her fee would be.

"I believe in payment by results," she said, gravely. "If I don't remove the Fitzhugh-Lennoxes, you pay me nothing. If I do, you pay me fifty guineas."

"I shall be jolly glad to get rid of them for fifty guineas!" he said with enthusiasm.

His task was now completely performed. But he found himself no more inclined to go. He stayed on. He asked her more questions about the business and then about herself. They found that, having been brought up in the country—her father had been a country doctor—they had several tastes in common, important tastes, a liking for lawn-tennis, golf, and jazzing—also for the sea.

At last he rose to go, paused, and said: "By the way, what does L. stand for, the L. of your first name—for my mother, you know?"

She did not know; but she said amiably: "Lalage—L-a-l-a-g-e."

"I'll tell her," he said, gravely, and went—with the greatest reluctance.

Lalage smiled at the door as it closed behind him. She liked him. He was a nice boy, so frank and simple, and his eyes were such a clear, deep blue, and his clear skin was so white above his tanned cheeks and brow, and he was so big and strong, something you could really hold on to. A very nice boy and not more than three years older than she.

Bob played billiards for an hour and went home to lunch with a splendid appetite. At lunch he told his mother that L. Smith was a girl, a rather good-looking girl, and not a man. He gave it as his opinion that she was capable and seemed quite likely to do the job. He showed no enthusiasm about her—none at all. He forgot to tell his mother that L. stood for Lalage. Perhaps he did not forget. Nothing cultivates the diplomatic sense in the young like being ruled with a rod of Bessemer. After lunch he went and played lawn-tennis. He came back to tea with a splendid appetite. As a rule he did not come back to tea.

At five Lalage arrived, wearing a business-like air, and over tea she discussed the matter of removing the Fitzhugh-Lennoxes with Mrs. Medmenham. Neither of them underrated the difficulty of dealing with the thick-skinned. But Lalage said that she believed that the secret passage in the panelling of the Grange might be of considerable service in making that historic home of England too uncomfortable to live in. Mrs. Medmenham was charmed with the idea of making those usurpers uncomfortable, even if they were not actually driven out of the Grange, and she readily agreed to take Lalage down to it on the Sunday afternoon to try what a week's patient work would do.

When Lalage went on to say that it was necessary that Bob should be there to take her through the underground passage and show her the working of the secret panels into the Grange he showed no eagerness whatever to accompany them.

He hesitated, frowning, before he said: "I can come on Sunday all right. And I think I can manage to stay on till Wednesday."

"You can manage perfectly well to stay the whole week and as long after as Miss Smith needs you," said his mother, tartly.

This was true. Moreover, he had every intention of managing perfectly well to stay the whole week and as much longer as Lalage stayed. But he frowned heavily and said gloomily that if he must he supposed he must.

Again the diplomatic sense and the rod of Bessemer.

"Oh, as soon as I understand all about those passages and panels I can get on quite well alone," said Lalage, amiably.

No doubt she could. But she wouldn't. He assured himself that he would see that she didn't. Much may be learnt from the limpet.

"Well, that's settled," said Mrs. Medmenham.

On her words there came a terrific burst of sound. It was not a bellow. It was not a roar. It was something, a horrible thing, between the two.

Lalage nearly dropped her cup; Mrs. Medmenham sank back in her chair, her face contorted with anguish. The horrible noise resolved itself into a rendition of "The Rosary" by a man who sang from the heart and not from the stomach—not a note was produced from lower than his Adam's apple. A ropy, throaty tenor is bad enough. This was a ropy, throaty baritone. And powerful—powerful is not the word. It was dynamic.

Lalage looked scared; then she said in a high, clear voice which carried through the din: "It isn't a voice. It's a rope!"

"For eight months! Sometimes three times a day! These semi-detached houses!" shrilled Mrs. Medmenham, feebly.

The famous song was blaring to its close, when, of a sudden, Lalage's charming face lit up with that smile—the smile that Bob so liked—the smile of ineffable mischief.

' Excuse me," she said, rose, went to the window, and leant out.

The famous song blared, grating, to its close. Trembling nature eased up in the dead, refreshing silence. Then Lalage laughed.

It was a clear, rippling, delightful laugh of genuine amusement which changed slowly to contempt. But such contempt! Volumes of contempt—all the contempt there was in the neighbourhood, and in St. John's Wood and in Regent's Park. And the laugh went on, perfectly modulated, unforced, relentless, for seconds and seconds; and the volume of contempt in it swelled and swelled till the very end.

It stopped, and Lalage turned from the window.

" By-y-y Jove ! " said Bob, softly.

Mrs. Medmenham gasped and murmured : " Wonderful ! " And again : " Wonderful ! "

" It took me a long time to get it right. I've practised it and practised it," said Lalage, pensively.

" It's wonderful ! It's genius ! " said Mrs. Medmenham, with conviction.

' It's a fair knock-out ! " said Bob, in tones of dazed admiration.

" I've several other useful laughs—some of them rather worse. They're a hobby of mine. People don't make enough of their laughs. I think it's done him good," said Lalage.

" It might have," said Mrs. Medmenham, doubtfully. " But that horrible fat young man's disposition is as brazen as his voice. The notes I've written him ! Only asking him to shut the window."

" Another of those thick-skinned merchants," said Bob.

" We shall soon see," said Lalage, patiently.

They waited, silent. Then a chord was struck on the next-door piano ; the accompanist dribbled through the prelude, and the horrible sounds burst out again. It was a rendition of " The End of a Perfect Day."

Bob saw Lalage set her teeth and frown. Then she leant out of the window again. Her straight back looked very determined. The song blared through and out. She laughed again, the same laugh of amused, blasting contempt. It seemed to Bob that it went on for a few seconds longer—perhaps ten. It stopped. A window next door shut down with a jarring bang.

" Downed him, begad ! " cried Bob, triumphantly. " By Jove ! If you were to laugh at the Briggses like that ! "

Ten seconds later the ropy baritone shut the front door behind him with a violence which shook both houses.

At eleven-fifteen on the Saturday morning following two stout fellows set up a black board in the front garden of his house. On it was painted in white letters : TO BE SOLD.

AFTER this success Mrs. Medmenham took Lalage down to the Medmenham dower house on the Sunday afternoon, confident that she would render her the far greater service of restoring the Grange to Bob. Lalage was less confident, but resolved to do her very best. Fifty guineas is fifty guineas. During most of the journey she questioned and cross-questioned Bob about the underground passage to the Grange and about the passage in the panelling. She learnt that the underground passage was no more than two hundred yards long and ran about six feet under the surface of the little, heavily wooded ridge which separated the two houses. Lined with hewn stone, and running through a gravelly soil, the drier for the wood above it, it was very little the worse for wear. When, on first learning of its existence a little while before the death of his father, Bob had set about exploring it, it had taken him but a few days to restore it to its old use. He had easily cleared out the air-holes which rose, well hidden, into the undergrowth of the wood, and sawn off an occasional tree-root which had pressed its slow way through the roof. He said that a couple of hours' work would have it fit for her use.

The passage in the panelling of the Grange was for the most part a staircase rising to the priest's hole at the top. Sliding panels opened from it into all four storeys, and all four of those panels were high up in the walls of the rooms or corridors into which they opened, evidently because no one sounding the walls would be likely to sound them so high up and so discover them. She said that she must explore these passages and stairs carefully with him. Then she asked Mrs. Medmenham if it would be possible to make the acquaintance of the Fitzhugh-Lennoxes, since it might prove useful.

" That's quite easy," said Mrs. Medmenham. " I'm told that they and their precious house-party are a perfect curse on the golf-links. Bob will easily get them introduced to you."

" It means that we shall have to play a lot of golf together," said Bob, gloomily.

Lalage showed no pique at his shrinking from her society. She had a strong suspicion that it was not heartfelt, but diplomatic.

They reached the dower house at tea-time ; and after tea Bob took Lalage to the little-used library, moved a bookcase, slid back a panel, and disclosed the opening of the underground passage. A cold, dank air welled up out of it.

He sniffed it with the air of a connoisseur and said: "Not so bad—quite breathable."

He lost no time getting to work at the passage, and at dinner informed them that it was all clear for Lalage's use.

Lalage enjoyed her work during the next three days. The country was charming and the food excellent. Then she made the acquaintance of Miss Fitzhugh-Lennox, a stout, high-coloured, snub-nosed girl of twenty-six, at the Golf Club on the Monday morning. There was no difficulty in making her acquaintance; when she learnt that Lalage was a friend of Mrs. Medmenham she was civil to her to effusiveness. Her brother, the Indispensable, was no less civil. Sleek and self-satisfied vulgarians, she could feel no compunction about removing them from their new home. She was surprised to find most of their guests pleasant, well-bred people. Then she gathered that it was the turn of the Fitzhugh-Lennoxes to be exploited. They did not seem to mind it; it was enough for them to have these denizens of the polite world in their house.

She observed no gloominess at all in Bob when it came to playing golf with her; and, like most active daughters of country doctors, she played a good game. After lunch she rejected firmly his proposal that they should return to the links, and got to work. In rubber-soled shoes and dust-coats, and each with an electric torch, they went to the Grange by the underground passage. As they climbed the secret staircase in the wall he showed her the four sliding panels which opened on to each floor.

Those panels were a bitter disappointment to Lalage. They were not above two feet square, and each of them was six feet above the floor of the room or corridor on to which it opened. She had seen herself entering the Grange on one storey and easily returning to the secret staircase through a panel on the next. Now she distinctly saw herself doing nothing of the kind.

In the priest's hole, surveying the panel which opened on to a long corridor, on either side of which were servants' bedrooms, she said in a mournful whisper: "These panels are awfully disappointing. I thought I could go through them, act as a very disagreeable family ghost, and get back again. But if I did someone might catch hold of my ankles as I was scrambling back."

"I could haul you up quickly," he whispered.

She shook her head and looked round the priest's hole with such a disconsolate face that he was compelled to slip a comforting arm round her. In her distress her rebuke lacked real conviction.

She sat on the edge of the shelf which had served the priest as bedstead and surveyed the disappointing panel gloomily. He watched her expectantly.

"Well, something's got to be done with it," she said at last, in a tone of deep disgust. "I shall have to think it all out again. We may as well be getting back."

Half-way down the tunnel she cheered up sufficiently to give her best rendering of a maniac's chuckle. Bob jumped about four feet.

"You might give a fellow warning," he said, in a pained tone.

"I always think they sound better when you don't expect them," she said, simply.

"Worse, you mean," he said, rather pettishly.

DURING the rest of the afternoon she kept falling into frowning reveries, was off her game at golf, and silent at dinner. After dinner she played picquet with Bob, to the accompaniment of the gentle snoring of his sleeping mother, and won three parties. He handed three shillings to her. She took them and broke into a hideous, cackling, senile chuckle, prolonged.

"The miser's glee," she said, with modest pride.

Mrs. Medmenham awoke with a start and said: "I must have been dreaming of your grandfather, Bob. He was laughing. His laugh is still ringing in my ears. Most curious."

"Oh—ah—yes. Most," said Bob.

"Do not grin like an idiot," said his mother, kindly.

Next morning Lalage came to her *tête-à-tête* breakfast with Bob looking rather fagged, and told him that she had lain awake half the night trying to solve her problem. He begged her not to bother any more about it, and assured her that he did not care a rap whether he was restored to the Grange or not.

"Give it up?" she cried. "But if I were beaten by the Bonny Briggses, I should never be able to look myself in the face again. And how should I do my hair?"

Her failure to find the right plan spoiled her golf that morning. Bob's sympathy, though she said that she prized it, was of no avail. At lunch she was in low spirits—good as the food was. After lunch she insisted on going back to the priest's hole in search of inspiration. She found none.

Nor did the morrow bring the idea she was seeking; but it brought the vicar's wife to tea, to pour into the sympathetic ear of Mrs. Medmenham a vast accumulation of local gossip. When they had carefully

sifted that mass, the vicar's wife said: "I suppose we shall soon be congratulating Mr. Medmenham on his engagement to Miss Smith. Everybody tells me that they will make a perfect pair."

Mrs. Medmenham was taken aback; but she did not show it. None the less she was hard put to it to be merely mysterious on the subject. She was in a fury of outraged proprietorship; and if she had not needed Lalage's help so sorely in the matter of the Bonny Briggs brood, she would have turned her out of the house directly she returned from the golf links. She was not at all frightened. She knew that she had Bob under her thumb. But she did not ignore the warning. That night there was no moonlit stroll, or even picquet, for Lalage and Bob. Dutifully he read aloud to his dozing mother a work of serious fiction, entitled "Seared Souls." And when she felt sufficiently wakeful to go to bed, she took Lalage with her. Next morning there was no *tête-à-tête* breakfast for them. A martyr to motherliness, Mrs. Medmenham was down first. During breakfast she more than once hinted that it was full time that Lalage got in some sound work on the Bonny Briggses and ignored utterly Bob's suggestion that in these delicate operations haste was dangerous. Lalage, who appeared to have slept well and to be in excellent spirits, said that her plan was now complete and she

The laugh stopped and Lalage turned from the window.

would put it into execution that very night.

On the way to the links Bob adjured her earnestly not to spoil everything by premature action. In three weeks, or perhaps a fortnight, it might be safe to act; earlier action would be absurd.

"But you don't know anything about my plan," she said, quickly. "The fact is, I've had quite the wrong idea in my head. I've been thinking all the time of how to get at the Bonny Briggses themselves. To turn them out I needn't get at them at all."

"Well, you know, I'm in no hurry for them to be turned out," he said. "The longer you stay the better I shall like it. But why should they go if you don't get at them?"

"Of course I shall get at them in a way—indirectly. The servants are the people to get at directly. Without servants, and lots of them, a big house like that, full of guests too, would be absolutely hopeless. Nobody could live in it. And that panel in the priest's hole is absolutely made for the servants. Can you get it to move backwards and forwards quickly and quite smoothly without any noise at all?"

"Rather!" said Bob. Then he added quickly: "But of course I shall want help."

"Oh, I'll help all right," she said, quickly.

Accordingly, after lunch, with a brief word of explanation to Mrs. Medmenham, who had shown some intention of spending the afternoon with them, they hurried off to the priest's hole. It seemed to Lalage that her share of the work consisted in sitting on the shelf-bedstead and conversing in a whisper, while Bob worked. But with that help Bob contrived to have the panel moving with a noiseless smoothness at the end of a patient and laborious hour. Then on their return to the dower house he learnt that his mother was sleeping off the effects of her early rising, carried Lalage off to the links, and kept her there till it was time to dress for dinner. At dinner Mrs. Medmenham, feeling that Lalage's task was very nearly done, made no secret of the fact that she was not a girl after her own heart. At ten-twenty-five Lalage interrupted the reading of "Scared Souls" and awoke Mrs. Medmenham by declaring that it was time to get to work. She begged Mrs. Medmenham not to sit up for them, for she might be half the night removing the Bonny Briggses. They put on their dust-coats and rubber-soled shoes and were in the priest's hole at ten-forty-five.

LALAGE mounted the ladder and Bob switched off the electric torch. She opened the panel, very gently indeed, about two inches, and peeped down into a long, narrow, dimly-lighted corridor. There were five rooms on either side of it; the doors of four of them were open; and their occupants were talking to one another. She had arrived to the very minute; the female, but pampered, menials were going to bed.

She closed the panel and murmured: "Now you're going to hear the Flitcher."

"Who's the Flitcher?" said Bob.

"Fancy your not knowing your ancestral ghost!" she murmured, and laughed a soft, mischievous laugh.

She opened the panel a few inches, drew a long breath, put her mouth to the opening, and let out a short, yelping cry, a horrid cry, half animal, half human, and wholly ghastly. There was silence for about three seconds; then cries of affright rose from the maids at their toilet. She waited till half-a-dozen of them, asking excited questions, were in the corridor; then she laughed a shrill, screaming laugh which rang down the corridor and through the rooms. It was a dreadful laugh, inhuman, blood-curdling, the laugh of a lost soul who has become a devil, a challenging, threatening laugh, charged with blasting malignity. It died away in a long-drawn, chilling wail of utter hopelessness.

An answering chorus of shrieks rose from the corridor. She closed the panel and said in a tone of gentle satisfaction: "That's the Flitcher."

"M-m-my goodness! I should t-t-think it was!" stuttered Bob.

For all that he knew the harmless, and even attractive, source of the sound, the skin of his scalp was prickling and the chills were racing down his spine.

"I'm proud of the Flitcher. I took a lot of trouble over him," she murmured, pensively.

"I should think you did! I never heard anything so perfectly devilish!" he said, with evident sincerity.

They were silent; and he panted a little.

In about five minutes she opened the panel again. There was still screaming—hysterics. But male voices, remonstrant, derisive, mingled with the din. The sceptic butler, the French *chef*—an anti-Clerical—and two common-sense footmen were on the scene, soothing, restoring reason.

Lalage shut the panel, came down the steps, and said: "There's nothing more to be done for a good hour. Shall we go back to the dower house and wait there?"

"It's too much of a fag," said Bob, quickly, but in a still shaky voice. "We've plenty to talk about."

She sat down on the bed shelf with her back against the wall. He sat down beside her and snuggled up against her. He was big to snuggle; but it was a reversal of their

natural *rôles*. She did not seem to mind. Presently he took hold of her hand, evidently for comfort. She let him hold it. It is the woman's part to comfort.

But it was eleven-forty-two before he had recovered sufficiently from the Flitcher to ask her to marry him. She refused—but with no great conviction. He was not greatly discouraged, so that he was able to bear it like a man. She respected him for his fortitude.

They still had plenty to talk about—his blank future among other things—and it was well past the hour when she said that it was time that she was getting to work again, mounted the steps, and opened the panel.

The corridor was dark; only a faint murmur of voices came from the third room on the left. The sceptic butler and the French *chef*—an anti-Clerical—were comparing their scorns of superstition over a bottle of Moët and Chandon 1906. It was the butler's favourite wine. He had gone all the way down to the cellar to get it.

Lalage filled her lungs and sent the yelping cry ringing down the corridor, then again, and then again. Half the bedroom doors opened and there were shrill cries. Then she gave them the hellish laugh and hopeless wail. On the instant hysterics were the order of the night. About six young women shrieked their shrillest against one another. The voices of flabbergasted strong men, swearing, mingled with their cries. The din was rising in splendid crescendo, when, above it, dominating it, came a rich, roaring voice. It asked what the devil that infernal row was about. Bonny Briggs himself!

Lalage let out the yelping cry—once. There came the sound of running feet. There was a rush. The sceptic butler headed it. Then there seemed to be a squealing, swearing jam at the end of the corridor as Bonny Briggs withstood the pampered tide. It overwhelmed him; they heard his furious imprecations grow faint as he was borne downstairs. There was silence.

"That will do for to-night," said Lalage, in a tone of gentle satisfaction.

Bob said that he thought it would do for to-night.

As they passed the ground-floor panel they heard a tumult in the room into which it opened. Before retiring to the kitchen for the night his pampered menials were remonstrating with Bonny Briggs for exposing respectable unmarried men and women to the screams of the Flitcher.

Thirty yards down the passage Bob began to laugh. He was still laughing when they came out of it. For a man whose dearest hope had been so recently blighted, he laughed well.

When he stopped laughing, he said: "The service at the Grange will be jolly poor to-morrow."

He was wrong. On the morrow there was no service at the Grange. At dawn the chastened menials returned to the Flitcher's haunt and packed. They then breakfasted well. They did not wash up. Then with their luggage they went to the station in Mr. Fitzhugh-Lennox's four motor-cars and caught the first train to peaceful London. They did not awake him to ask for the loan of the cars.

THE Fitzhugh-Lennoxes and their guests got their own breakfast. It was great fun, but a poor breakfast. Then there was the washing up. Lunch loomed ahead. Miss Fitzhugh-Lennox and her guests came late to the Golf Club. Lalage was sitting in front of the club-house. Miss Fitzhugh-Lennox made light of the Flitcher, but she seemed eager for information. So did her friends. Lalage seemed to be in a dreamy mood; but she was full of information. She too made light of the Flitcher. She too held the theory that ghosts were all nonsense; she said that she did. But she let out that the Flitcher was not attached to any particular family, only to the Grange—a case of house-fitting. His cry boded ill to anyone dwelling in it, Fitzhugh-Lennoxes, Fittleworths, Medmenhams, or, before the Medmenhams, Beauchamps. But of course it was all nonsense—there was no Flitcher. Also it was his way, in his periods of activity, to take the house storey by storey and scream on each in turn. They might expect him on the third storey that night. By the end of the week he should be screaming in the basement. It seemed to be his idea that houses should be cleared from the top—like a furniture-remover.

Miss Fitzhugh-Lennox and her guests hung on her lips, if anything, a trifle sicklily. They agreed with her that it was all nonsense and went off to play golf. They were off their game.

Lunch at the Grange was well-meant, but unsuccessful. Guests began to fade by the two-forty-five train. There came a storm and the wind moaned about the top floor. Someone hinted that the Flitcher was practising for the coming night; and by six-fifteen the rest of the guests had faded. The successful party, which marked such an important step in the social career and from which they expected so much, had fizzled out; and at seven o'clock the Fitzhugh-Lennoxes motored gloomily to London—spoiled by prosperity, they sought brighter scenes and better food.

At breakfast next morning Mrs. Medmenham observed to Lalage that there was

nothing more she could do at Medmenham and there was an excellent train to London at eleven-five. Lalage caught it.

The next morning Bob came to her office to report — he said that he had come to report. He kept on coming every morning, and sometimes in the afternoon as well. This persistent action led to her lunching with him often. Ten days later he brought with him a cheque for fifty guineas. Under compulsion from his hard-faced wife, who pressed firmly and without ceasing the point that she had no use whatever for a house to which you could not safely invite members of the polite world who liked their meals both regular and good, Bonny Briggs had capitulated and sold him the Grange. Nevertheless, Bob did not cease to come to the office every morning. A fortnight later Lalage in her turn capitulated and became engaged to him

Bob told his mother, dauntlessly. Then the trouble began. She took out the rod of Bessemer and tried to coax him with it to marry Miss Agatha Fittleworth, who had a hundred thousand pounds. Ever since he had inherited the hundred and forty thousand pounds, it had been roughly understood that he would marry that amiable girl. A rod of Bessemer in the hands of a frail woman is a terrible weapon ; and there were a number of maternal uncles and aunts, chips of the same old block, to lend a hand when his mother tired. Bob put up a good, but losing, fight.

Lalage's attitude seemed to him a trifle unsympathetic; she almost appeared to like to see him suffer and be strong. Perhaps she thought it good for him. She perceived clearly enough that it was a losing fight. She had divined that his was one of those rich natures which naturally take the line of the least resistance. To understand is to forgive. She forgave him. Also, towards the end of the contest she decided that she must be strong for two. Then the end of the contest came. He broke the news of his defeat at lunch—after lunch. to be exact—at the Ritz.

" It's no good," he said, in a voice with tears in it. " I'm beat; and I know it. The mater's won; and I shall have to give you up."

" Poor boy," cooed Lalage, gazing at his miserable face and drooping figure with mournfully sympathetic eyes.

Bob groaned.

" It's heart-breaking," she said.

Bob groaned again.

' But never mind," she said, in cheerier tones. " I'll laugh at your wedding."

Bob sat upright.

" You'll what ? " he said, in a rather strained voice.

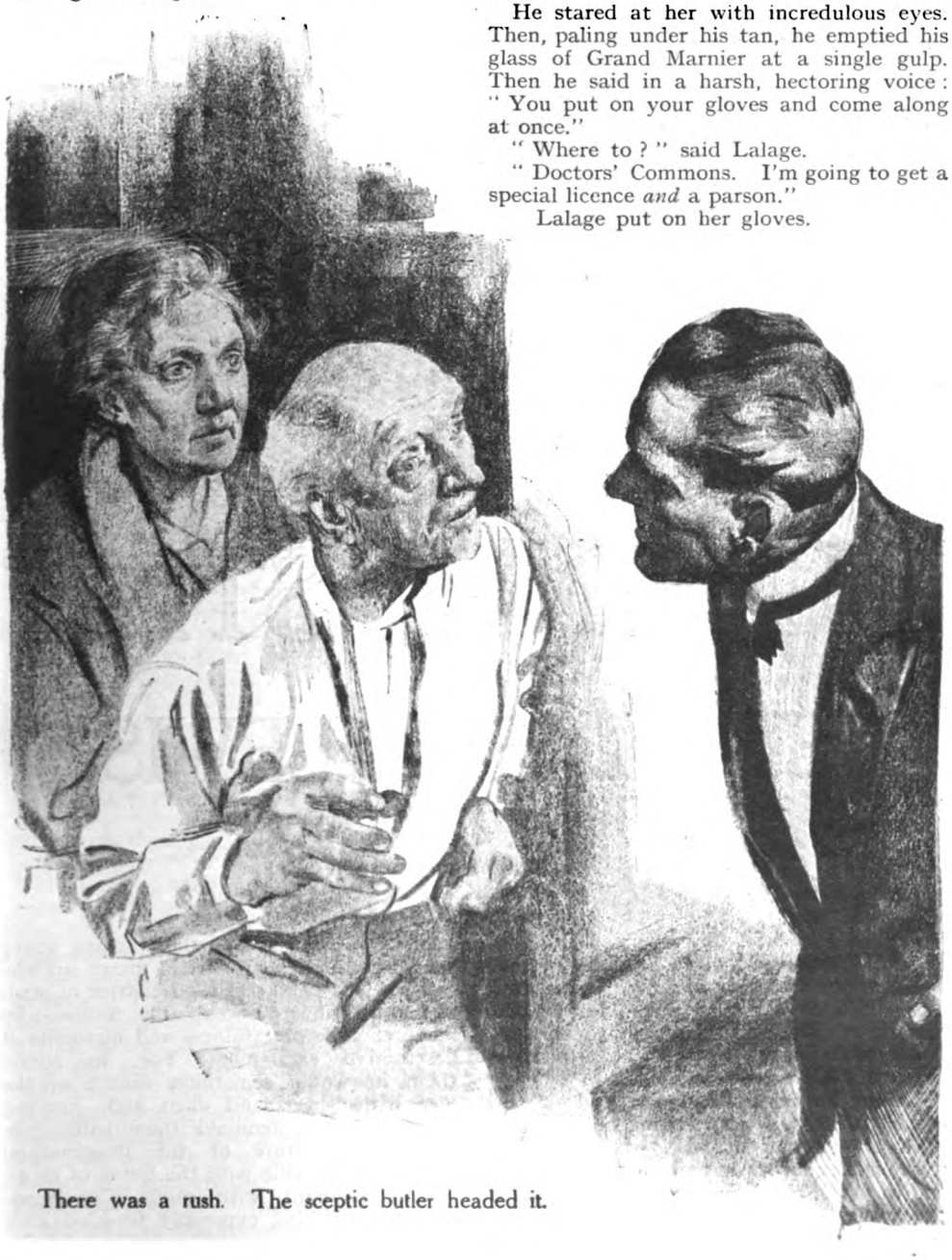
" Laugh at your wedding. I have a very good laugh for loveless marriages. It comes about the middle of the ceremony," she said, in gentle, explanatory tones.

He stared at her with incredulous eyes. Then, paling under his tan, he emptied his glass of Grand Marnier at a single gulp. Then he said in a harsh, hectoring voice: " You put on your gloves and come along at once."

" Where to ? " said Lalage.

" Doctors' Commons. I'm going to get a special licence *and* a parson."

Lalage put on her gloves.



There was a rush. The sceptic butler headed it.

BLIND JUSTICE

By

ETHELREDA LEWIS

(Author of "The Harp," "Aloysius Horn," etc., etc.)

Illustrated by
S. H. VEDDER

I.

INTO his clay models Sandasa put all his memories of vision. It was as if sight, deprived of one abiding-place, were clamouring through the fingers, filling dull matter with light, piercing through solids to find form.

Before he lost his sight Sandasa had earned a merry living, sitting on the edge of a city pavement. He would set out rows of oxen, of sheep and plumed ostriches and warriors, hippos and giraffes and quilled porcupines, to catch the eye of strangers and white children. In the laughing young native children recognized a grown-up who saw life as a child sees it—a matter of mud-pies and serious preoccupation, followed by laughter and forgetfulness and moments of destructive excitement. For, to amuse them, he would sometimes snatch up the nice little sheep and oxen and, pressing them together, remould them into some grotesque creature of the imagination, such as a crocodile with the horns of an ox or an elephant with quills. No shop-walker exhibiting expensive fur-clad lions

and tigers ever seemed ready to play such pranks for their entertainment. Neither could he have produced from the ruins such alluring fantasies of the imagination.

"Buy me *that*, please, Mummy!"

"Oh, no, dear; that's just rubbish. Not a real animal at all. You shall have this nice pair of oxen instead."

And the child, sighing at the strange, wasteful ways of big people, would coldly clasp the oxen and move away with backward looks at the forbidden creatures of fantasy still held out to him by the young native. And the eyes of the child and the sculptor would meet and linger in a moment of ineffable understanding before the crowd parted that glance for ever.

Sandasa, too, would sigh and hide away the fictitious monster in the box where he carried stock and the day's food.

BUT now Sandasa was blind and the impulses of those merry fingers were changed and sombre. Also the Big Town suited him no more.

In the kraal the blind sit and listen to the rustling voices of the mealie stalks, to the crackling and purring of the fire, to the sound of the far drift where water sometimes runs faint and shallow over the stones and sometimes goes rushing and roaring in the very same place. They hear the tranquil sounds that outline the movements of cattle and goats. They know the rhythm in the stirring of the pot and the grinding of the corn. The crescendo of the young girls approaching from the fields, or from the river with the full water-pots; the diminuendo of their daily departure in song and laughter or quarrelsome speech —these are the music of the blind. Yes, in the kraal they are wrapped in the safe mantle of the familiar. Faint smiles come and go on their faces. They join eagerly in the talk where there is nothing to be afraid of. There is nothing passing by that will harm them.

Nothing.

No footstep they must not miss.

No voice amongst a thousand jarring sounds, a voice for which the very hearing is spread as a net is spread to catch fish.

And at night they sleep as safely in the warm hut as they slept away the safe daylight hours in the warm sun.

But in the town the blind sit still; so cold and still. They may not move after the moving sunbeam as in the kraal, amongst familiar objects that guide them almost as if they loved the feeling hand—the huts, the warmth of fires, the kraal wall of dead bush and stones. "This way, Sandasa," they whisper, "this way."

Oh, no; in the street you are led by a child to one spot for the day, and then the child will return for you at night when the blind are weary and dazed from the constant clanging of the trams and the hootings and swiftness of the motor-cars and the passing of feet and the talk in many tongues that is so rarely directed to a blind man's ear. And the sun leaves you, but the child does not come to help you to find it. He will not come till nightfall. And then, at nightfall, stiff and shivering you rise and follow the child across street after street—and again street after street—for as long as in the country you would take to walk three or four miles. And still you cannot escape the trams and the motor-cars. And then you turn up a narrow alley and into a door. And there is warmth but no room, as there is in the rounded kraal huts. And the white woman who lives opposite with a coloured man begins to shriek and cry and say bad words with the drink she has had. And all the little children begin to cry when they hear her. But you eat, and presently sleep like a log; sleep as you did not dare in the long vigil in the town for fear you should be robbed. You sleep. And another day dawns sunless. For the sun can never reach your side of the alley.

Yes, Sandasa was blind now and sat in a street all day. But he never slept nor did the day seem long. Shall the span of twenty-four hours, the sun's daily journey, seem long when for twenty years you have listened for a voice, a footstep?

Besides, Sandasa's work was different now. It is true he still made a few oxen and sheep for the children; and the tourists who were strange to Africa would buy his little feathered warriors. They were still set out on the kerb beside him. And both oxen and warriors were far more beautiful now than when Sandasa had been a merry young boy of twenty who laughed into the eyes of children and whose shining teeth were the admiration of white people.

Yes, the little clay models were beautiful now from the sensitive fingers which have to see as well as feel. Also, in the box in which he carried his stock-in-trade there was always other work of his.

"LET me see what you've got. Open your box, please. These oxen are—they're sculpture. Not clay dolls."

Sandasa shook his head. The voice pleased him, but no man ever intruded on his private affairs.

Then the white man stooped down beside him and said in a low voice: "I also work with the clay. Not here—I come from a city far away. It is my living. I also make figures for my bread and drink. Show me your best work, my brother."

And at that last word and the loving voice, Sandasa gazed sightlessly upward to the face of the white man. And he felt the eagerness of him in the faint trembling and psychic emanation which only the blind can sense. And by that he knew that the stranger could also weep and shiver for joy when his hands had moulded a face or—or a hand.

So he said to the stranger: "When none is looking I will show you."

And when there came a lull in approaching footsteps he opened the box for a few swift moments—and the stranger saw what it held.

Under a wet rag were two compartments of wood such as might hold a large bottle. And in one of these, laid tenderly on a bed of soft clay, was the clay head of a man. And in the other there stood on its wrist the model of a hand: a fist that was clenched about a small sharp knife of a shape unknown in Europe.

The stranger made a sharp sound and gazed at the sculptured face. Fear and ferocity glowed like a fire in those drawn-back lips and in the down-staring, heavy-lidded eyes. In one flash of the brain he apprehended, too, the magnificent menace in the clenched fist.

When the box was closed again at the approach of passers-by, the stranger said, whisperingly: "My God, brother, you are a sculptor. But tell me, why does the head have only one ear?"

"It is the last man I saw, white brother," said Sandasa, his head at that strange, rapt angle of the blind, as if he were seeing visions, "and that is how he was made."

"And the broken finger on the fist?"

"That also is how he was made."

The stranger felt a shudder stroke his flesh at the cold breath of bygone horror. He felt a question, one question, pushing its way inevitably to his lips, inevitably, automatically, fiercely.

But why ask the question when he knew—oh, surely he knew—the answer?

But he did ask it.

Leaning close to the blind man's ear, he whispered rapidly: "But tell me, brother, what was the fist with the knife doing? What was it *doing?*"

Sandasa, not moving his head from that rapt angle of vision, said with unraised voice: "It was the hand that pierced these eyes out."

II.

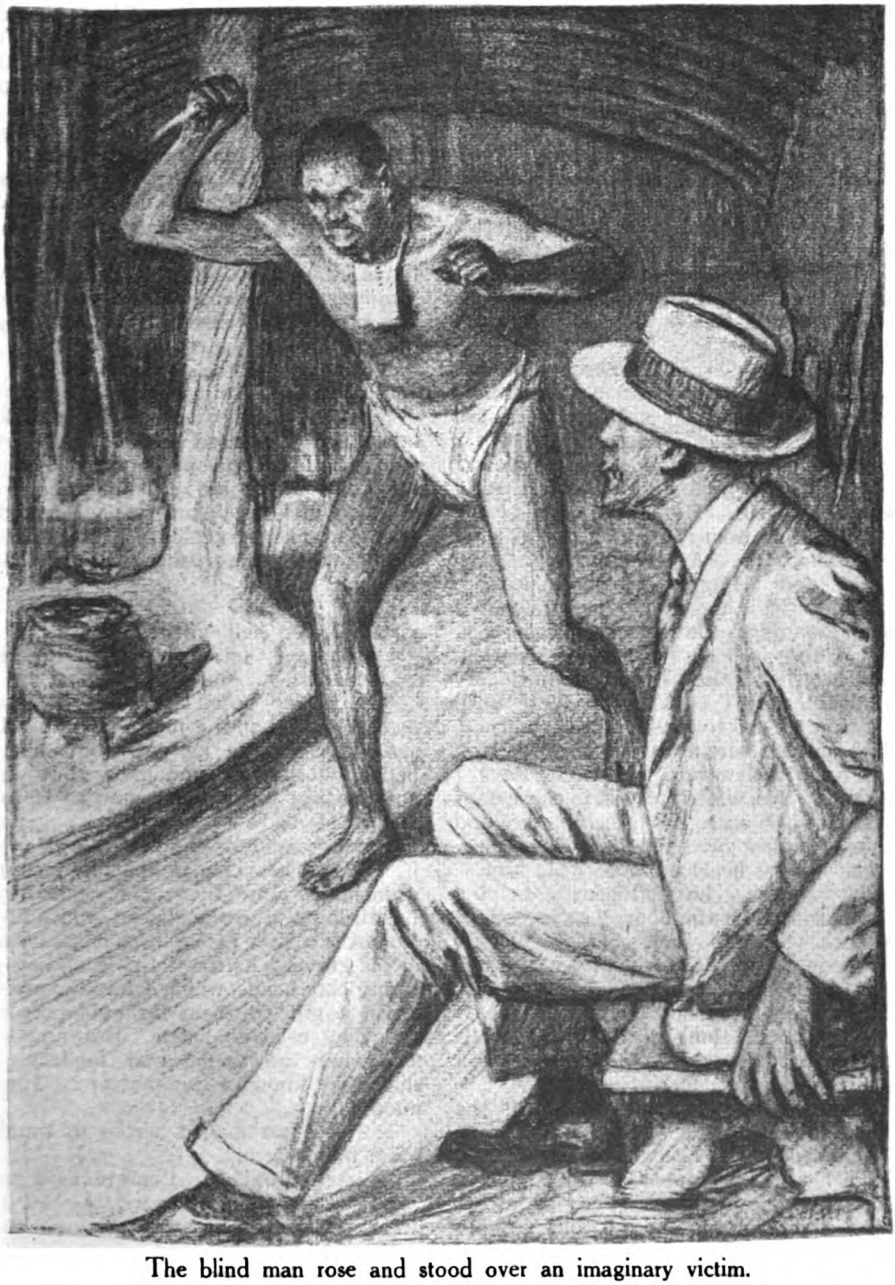
BEFORE he left the Big Town the sculptor went several times to Sandasa's hut in one of the town locations. He had come to the town to model the bust of a dull politician, so many ways were there of earning a living. But what with the mine natives and the urge their fine elemental bodies gave him to do good work, and what with Sandasa and his story, the pot-boiling job had never gone so quickly and so easily. Just a few more public men with their cloth-padded shoulders and stiff, self-conscious tilt of the head, and he would be able to come back to an orgy of work of his own, with subjects in which the problem of trousers need not be considered.

"Good thing they can only afford a bust," he had muttered viciously to himself when confronted with yet another middle-aged male in striped trousers and frock-coat, "or I might have to ask him to drape himself in one of those jolly Shangaan petticoats for the lower half."

But in Sandasa's hut he found forgetfulness of soul-fretting sittings with the great. There he had discovered a shelf full of clay heads and hands. And each head had only one ear and each fist had the third finger broken off at the second joint. Some were already perished, dry and cracked. Others, under wet filthy rags, still possessed some sharpness and clearness, but were not so perfect as the head and fist the sculptor had first seen.

"Sandasa?" said the location superintendent. "Well, sir, he's a bit queer in the head. My predecessor here told me that he was making these clay heads and hands fifteen years ago. Every now and then I have to make a raid and clear out the lot. Bury 'em in the rubbish pits. Then he begins again until the hut's full. Always wakes once every night, so his old mother says, to soak the cloths over them. Yes, he's queer. You should have seen the to-do we had one day when there was a fire in the location. Broke out about a quarter of a mile from Sandasa's place. No danger really. But you should have seen him trying to save his clay heads. On a Sunday it was. Rushing to and fro and stumbling and falling and hitting his head. And all the children laughing and staring—those that hadn't rushed over to the fire.

"Ever seen a blind man cry, sir? It's—it's awful, sir. Makes you feel as if something was wrong up above. Something about a sparrow falling, and the Heavenly Father—you remember, sir. It doesn't square with what we were taught at Sunday-school. Providence and so on. Shaking and sobbing all the evening, long after the fire was put out. I had to go and soothe him down a bit. He'll always listen to me—I used to be a transport rider in his part of the country, and he always wants to talk about it. I know his lingo, too, fairly well. That's the only thing that'll bring you near a native. And they don't



The blind man rose and stood over an imaginary victim.

seem so queer when you have their speech and know where they come from. Yes, Sandasa's just as whole as a man with eyes when it comes to picturing Nyasaland. He had his sight when he first left it to come down here. Twenty years ago that must be."

"I suppose he went on the mines?" said the sculptor, filling another pipe.

"No; he's always made clay figures. He had two brothers in the compounds making a good deal more than he did. But he wouldn't go down a mine. He always said the darkness would hurt him."

"And so it has, by God!" murmured the sculptor. "It—caught him all right, mine or no mine."

He left the superintendent's office and

walked slowly towards Sandasa's hut. In his mind he turned over the possible ways in which he could break the spell that held the blind man to the making of heads and fists. The superintendent had outlined the story of it to him.

There was only one possible way.

"Sandasa," he said, when he was seated on the little stool always brought forward for him by the old woman, Sandasa's mother, "tell me, is it not true that you make more and more heads and hands of that man because you fear to lose the picture of what he was like? Is that not true, brother?"

"That is true," said Sandasa, sombrely. "Must I lose the day when a murderer is found? With these eyes I saw him kill my cousin. I had been asleep. Very far in dreams as the young sleep. When I awoke with the groaning he had already killed my cousin. He stood over him—so." The blind man rose and stood over an imaginary victim. A shocking expression of hate and triumph struggled through that windowless mask. "My cousin had stopped groaning. But he struck him again, twice. Thus—— And thus—— The man did not see that I also slept in the hut. My cousin said that I could sleep there until it was time for me to make another journey. He had sent his wife away because this man would have stolen her. In those days I wandered. Yes, white brother, in those days I wandered. Youth has greedy eyes and one sings loudest over the fresh clay."

The sculptor's heart melted within him.

"Oh, Sandasa," he said gently, helping him to his place on the floor, "so say all we who work with the clay. See, then, how many there are in the world who would call you brother—from where I came, many weeks' journey from here across the sea!"

Sandasa stared long through the walls as if he tried to summon those unseen kinsmen. Presently he spoke again.

"There was always room for me at the farm and in the kraals when the Big Town made me too sick. When my heart felt too sore here"—he pressed a thin hand to his breast—"then would I go far away, running quickly and leaping, and making music. Now I must not go away from the Big Town. It is here, where all men come for the gold, that I may find him. Where else could I listen for the voice? There are no such voices in the mealie lands. And the mountains keep silence."

"The voice? Did he speak to you, then?"

"He spoke to me. Certainly he spoke to me. Long he stared at me like an animal surprised at the drinking pool. Then he picked up his lantern and came near, stepping softly, very softly. I tried to rise, but he was too quick for me. Youth is full of sleep and the thoughts are confused. Those who laugh by day, brother, sleep well. Now I neither laugh nor sleep.

"You ask what were the words he said. I remember them, brother. Each night they wake me. And I rise and wet the clay.

"He put the candle on a box. Was I to know what his thoughts were? Not until it was too late and he held me tight. I was but a stripling in his grasp. Twenty summers I had seen and he was a man in the prime, and strong from striking out the gold from the rocks. Was I to know such thoughts as the wicked have?

"He stared into my eyes. And speaking very softly, for he feared to speak loudly in the hut, he stared and said, 'An eyeless man will not know me again.' And from the knife which he held aloft there fell a drop on my lips. And when I tasted it I cried out and struggled. I that had been dumb found voice against the knife that was unclean."

SANDASA fell silent. But his head still kept the rapt angle of the seer of visions.

"Is it not possible," said the sculptor presently, "that the murderer is dead long ago? It is true he got away from the police, but how do you know that you are not waiting for a dead man? If he has died in his bed——"

Sandasa smiled.

"When the voice in the night comes to wake me no more, then will my task be done. I shall know when he is dead, white brother. Do not fear that I take these pains for a man in his grave. As for the police, they laugh at my clay heads, which I have many times made a gift to them for evidence. Long ago they used to listen. But now—these new ones are young and foolish. What shall they know of this matter? They call me madman."

The sculptor leaned across to touch the blind man's arm.

"Listen, Sandasa. I can make it so that you need not wake up to wet the clay in the night. Let me take away this newest head and hand and I will send you the very same in bronze—hard as this penny, Sandasa—which can never crack or bend or get smeared. And, first, I will take a photo of them, so that if anything happens you will still have the picture with you."

"Do not trouble to make a picture, white brother. In seven days I make me another head and hand that are better than a picture. How can one feel a picture—so, with the finger-tips? But take these if you will and make them hard like pennies.

That will truly be the task of a wise man, and my heart is soft and full of joy for the honour brought to the work of my hands."

Peace shone from Sandasa's face; such peace as smote his friend with doubt and misgiving.

"It will be many months before they will come back to you, Sandasa. I shall have to take them far across the sea with me, and that will take long. You will not fret and think they are not coming?"

Sandasa smiled his strange, blind smile.

"My white brother forgets that to wait is both meat and drink to me. A little more meat and drink will surely not kill. Nay, it will give longer life, brother, to such as I."

III.

BUT not all the police were young and foolish and fluffy of chin. There was Inspector O'Gorman, for example, that stout Irish veteran who, after many years in the Big Town, had been moved at his own request to a small dorp in the Transvaal. He hated country life for himself, but for his ailing wife he loved it.

A silent man when on duty in the Big Town, where the police must be sharp as needles, the country made him talkative and friendly. And one night, when he had been telling the story of the blind native who in the street sold clay oxen but at home made nothing but heads of a one-eared man with a knife in his hand, a young farmer in the hotel bar said suddenly: "What *sort* of a hand, O'Gorman? What *sort* of a hand?"

O'Gorman looked at him queerly.

"What sort of a hand would it be, then, but to have its four fingers and a thumb, Mr. Wilmot?"

His professional instinct warned him not to be putting ideas into the young man's head before he should explain himself. But his professional heart, after a long country sleep, began to beat pleasurably.

They looked at each other questioningly. Then young Wilmot said, slowly: "Shouldn't it rather have a third finger that's broken——"

"At the second joint? It should, sir, it should."

Suppressing this unprofessional eagerness, O'Gorman glanced at the door, and together they stepped outside into the frosty, brilliant night.

"Now, Mr. Wilmot, tell me where I can find him. He's been wanted twenty years for that night's work."

O'Gorman was retiring in a year's time. The thought of hooking a veteran fish where so many before him had failed made him feel twenty years younger.

"I'm sure he's living among the farm labourers on my neighbour's farm. A chap that always wears one of those knitted woollen caps that come over the ears. One day I saw him take it off to scratch his head. Beastly-looking fellow. Might be forty-five, fifty, as far as one can tell with a native. And then I saw the hand, too, roaming over his head. But only for a moment. When he saw me staring he quickly had his cap on again. Extraordinary that he can remember to be careful after so many years—if that is the chap."

"I think so, sir. I'll have to trouble you to come with me to-morrow to identify him."

O'Gorman stepped over to the bar window for light and became absorbed with a notebook.

"And still more extraordinary that a native criminal's ever caught in this country."

"Indeed it is, sir. God's own country for a get-away. But there's no safe get-away from your physical deficiencies, if so I may put it."

"That's true. Especially when there's a crazy blind chap taking care to perpetuate them. Great Scott, what a queer business! If anything comes of it, I'd give something to see those two faces when they're brought together."

IT was indeed a sight, as an impressionable young English policeman said to the mess afterwards, "Very nearly fit for the pictures."

"Pictures your grandmother," said a South African; "we get life here, not Hollywood."

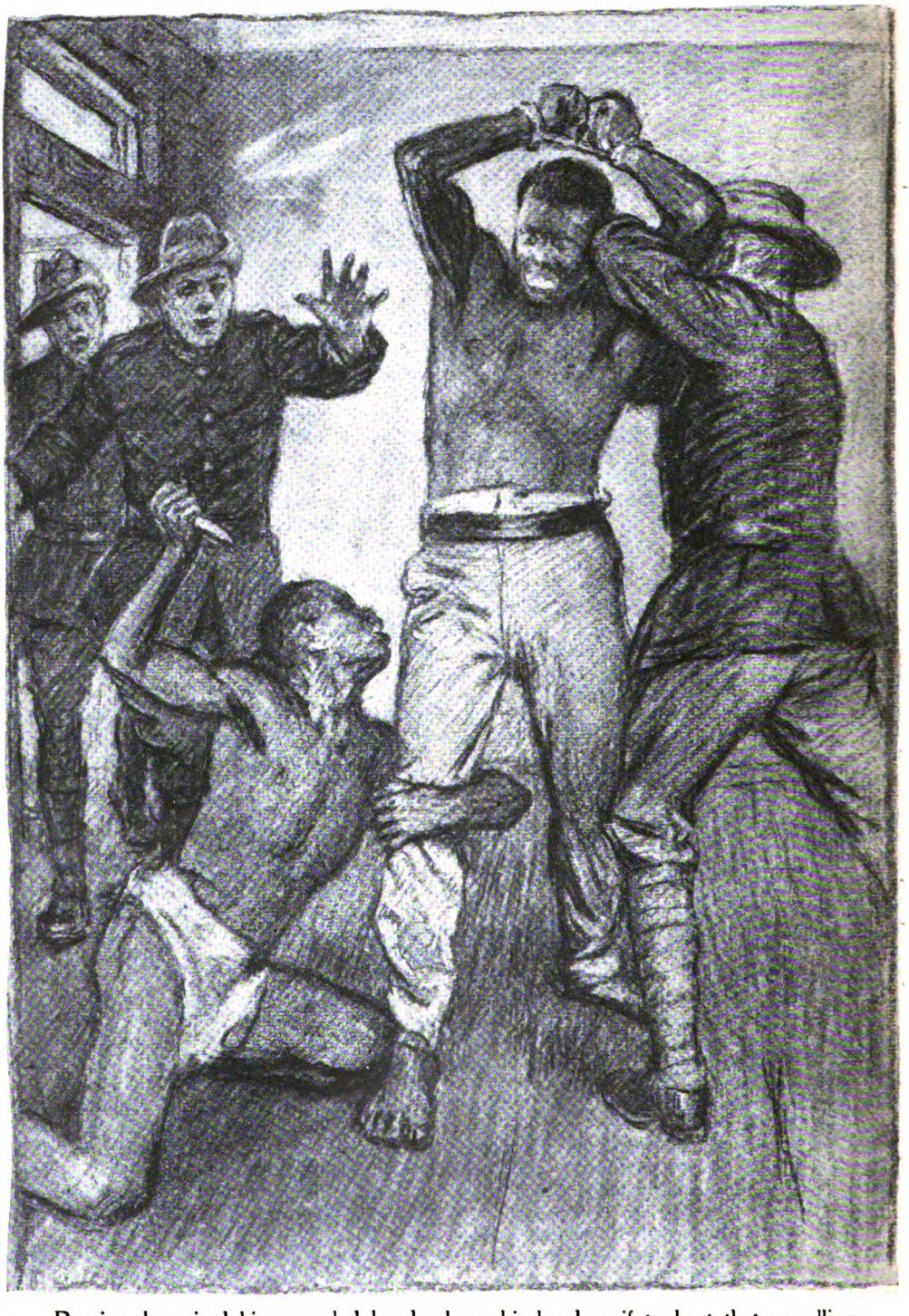
Sandasa, who had not slept since the day when a constable came to the hut and said: "Should you know his voice if this one-eared man of yours was in the same room with you?"

And he, Sandasa, had been seized with a dreadful cold shivering as he whispered, after long silence: "Yes, Baas, yes. Is he coming *soon?* To-day?"

Sandasa sat on the floor with his back to the wall in his accustomed attitude. His blind gaze was lifted as if it pierced the office wall and could see something beyond. But his skin was ashen-grey and shone with moisture on the forehead.

When a blind man cannot sleep and the visions press upon him too fiercely in the tedious night——

Three or four natives were ready to pass through the office, with orders not to speak unless they were addressed by the sergeant. For O'Gorman had an idea that the blind man would know when the mutilator was near, even if he never heard the voice.



Roaring, he raised his manacled hands above his head as if to beat that appalling mask for ever from his dreams.

"It's not very probable," said the Commandant, "but we can try it first. I admit that natives have queer intuitions that would be very useful in my office."

So Sandasa sat with his back to the wall, and at his left hand was the door from a corridor by which the natives were to enter. Opposite to him was another open door by which they were to make their exits into the Commandant's office.

The first man stepped in. His bare feet halted. They made little restless movements on the boards. Sandasa could have touched them. But he made no move, and the native, grinning widely at this experience, passed on to a beckoning policeman and burst into that high-pitched, almost girlish titter common to the black man.

Sandasa gazed through the wall, not having moved an eyelid. Only his nostrils made slight dilations.

A second prisoner entered and stood near the blind man.

"What's your name, Jim?" said the sergeant.

"My name, sir, is Methuen Malama."

The deep voice made no impression on Sandasa. His brain was intent on some other vision.

A third bare foot padded sullenly through the door—a handcuffed man, huge and hideous—a repulsive ogre with a disgusting smoothness at one side of his head; a physical hiatus the sight of which would rouse a faint nausea.

Three steps and he stopped motionless, the very picture of an animal sensing a trap, but not yet locating it—glaring eye and flickering nostril.

A movement behind him brought him lunging round to the right. With his eye on the police in the farther office he had not noticed a man seated with his back to the wall.

Sandasa had risen to his knees. His hands mowed the air with a scythe-like movement. On his knees he moved forward, mowing, mowing.

His blind head was thrown back in an ecstasy of inward sight, and on the sibilant, smiling lips there formed froth and dripping saliva.

At the sight of those eyeless, staring sockets the giant screamed inhumanly as a wounded stallion. The first touch and grip of those mowing hands round his knees brought an indescribable shuddering roar from his wide-open mouth—the noise man makes when nightmare gently touches him, or when a snake curls about his neck. Roaring, he raised his manacled hands above his head as if to beat that appalling mask for ever from his dreams.

There was a rush from both doors.

"Gosh!" panted one of the men who were hanging to the plunging bull of a man. "Close shave, that. Bennet, you get that blind devil away before we lock this beauty up again."

But that was easier said than done. Sandasa still mowed the air with his tentacles as if automatically driven by the dynamic forces let loose in that lost face—and in his scything right hand was a small sharp knife, held at a shockingly convenient angle for a billet in somebody's stomach.

SANDASA wept when they took him away to his hut. Not the feverish, lively tears that had arisen when fire broke out in the location, but slow, frozen tears that oozed one by one from eyes that seemed only now to have died.

For days he lay against the wall, a man shorn of a dream—Samson without the enemy-destroying pillars crashing grandly about doomed shoulders. Dark now, indeed, was the world to Sandasa—"all dark amid the blaze of noon."

Not even when the superintendent brought him a biggish box that had come all the way from Europe to that poor hut did he rouse himself to feel at the wonderful "One-Eared Negro" and "The Murderer's Fist," the work of a blind savage that had for weeks drawn to themselves the amazed and pitiful eyes of every artist in Rome and, later, in Paris—not even then could he lay his sensitive hands on the smooth bronze in pride and peace.

As for the strange sum of money that came from his friend the sculptor—the proceeds, he wrote to the superintendent, "of sales of Sandasa's work which must take him back to his own people"—Sandasa's old mother took it and went back alone to her kraal with the prestige of a queen, a new sewing-machine, and a scarlet parasol. For Sandasa, his work filched from him by the unnatural processes of legal justice, turned his face to the wall and ceased to live.

Who but Death may wipe away the chill tears of the artist bereft of impulse?

Running A Humorous Paper

By Augustus Muir

"SIR," said Samuel Johnson, one hundred and forty-four years ago, "there is not a young sapling upon Parnassus more severely blown about by every wind of criticism than that poor fellow." The recording Boswell does not tell us the name of the man to whom the Doctor was referring; but if the truth were known, he was probably the editor of a humorous paper.

A man buffeted by storms: it is scarcely the popular conception of one whose job is to scatter cheerfulness upon the bookstalls. But it is true. If you are told that the joke on page seventeen last week first appeared about the time of the Repeal of the Corn Laws, you can endure it, provided you are an editor of resolute self-control. But when some kind friend coyly puts his head round your door, begs to know if you are busy, and (on learning that you are) enters and relates with gusts of laughter some snappy story which he assures you will provide a brilliant full-page drawing for your star artist, and adds with a touch of self-complacent pride that you really ought to put it in hand at once, then you are forced to wonder why the law relating to firearms does not permit all editors of humorous publications to keep an automatic pistol in the desk. An ebony ruler is deadly, but not deadly enough.

Photo.] [*Swaine.*

Mr. REEVES SHAW.
Editor of "The Humorist."

Thus a man whose life is passed in the seeking and sifting of drollery need not look around to find his sorrows; they come at him like a cloud of locusts. "It is indeed much easier," remarked Addison, "to describe what is *not* humour than what it is." An editor often wishes that his own authors and artists would take this to their hearts when he is obliged to tell them: "We are not amused. Don't ask me why, but we are not." It is sometimes easy enough to point out to a man where his work falls short. You may advise him to cut here and add there; you may tell him to reconstruct, to tone down, to polish. And yet, if the little bright flickering spirit of humour is absent, then, do what you will, the piece of work is a failure, and you can't say why. Humour—that queer exaltation, that rapture, that dream, that fine essence—who is to describe it in terms of the workshop? Can you capture a thrill and put it under a microscope? Can you test a chuckle with litmus-paper?

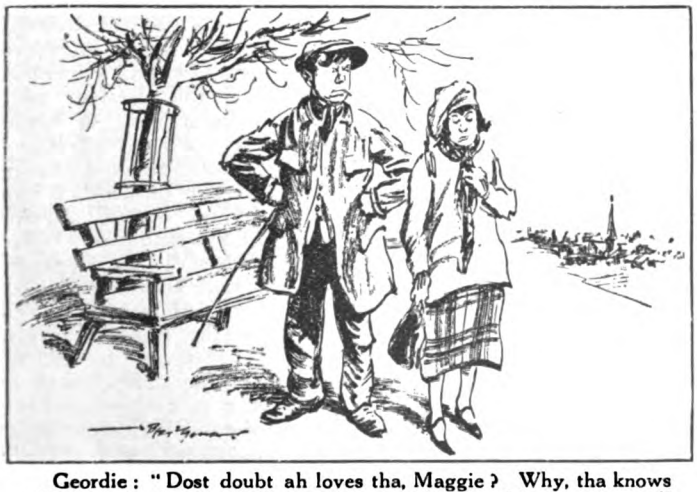
There was a time when Alexandre Dumas sat and wrote in a shop window, and revealed to the public of Paris how his romances were turned out. If the editor and staff of a humorous paper could be persuaded to do their day's work behind a glass screen with a turnstile at either end of the passage, it might scarcely be one of the more picturesque sights of London, but it would draw queues. There is a deep and very natural public curiosity about the technical side of humorous journalism. How does the fellow in control of a funny periodical really come to grips with his job?

Let us picture him as he tackles a new number of his paper. There is the front cover to be planned. Since the cover is, quite frankly, window-dressing, it must

amuse, attract, titillate; and it must suggest the style of the goods inside. For the main body of the paper, the stock of drawings in the Art Department is depleted by twenty or more, according to the amount of topical work that one's regular artists have in hand for immediate publication. And now for the reading matter. Epigrammatic comments on current affairs form the opening feature of nearly every humorous periodical in the world, and thirty or forty must be winnowed from quantities of less witty chaff. To state a news item or bit of tittle-tattle in a line or so and to coin a really bright jest about it is a specialized art, and few writers have mastered it. Having sent his selection of these to the printers, the editor must decide which of his accepted articles, stories, and verses are suitable for the issue in hand.

Meantime, one of the many jobs to which an editor of a humorous periodical must daily attend is the inspection of "roughs." This laborious duty is easily misinterpreted. It has no link, implied or explicit, with the rowdier dwellers in Shoreditch: a "rough" is a comic artist's attempt to convey his joke with the least amount of trouble to himself. Some artists are so impressionistic in their "roughs" that many an abstruse jigsaw puzzle is easier to solve. As for the quite illegible joke written underneath, for all the poor editor knows it may be the facsimile of a Hindustani wall-text. This may possibly explain why, about a fortnight later, when the bundle of finished drawings turns

Local Policeman (to St. George): "You killed this 'ere dragon, didn't you?"
St. George: "I did."
L.P.: "Well, you can't leave it lyin' about 'ere, you know!"



Geordie: "Dost doubt ah loves tha, Maggie? Why, tha knows ah've gotten tha portrait 'anging next to t' prize whippet at 'oam!"

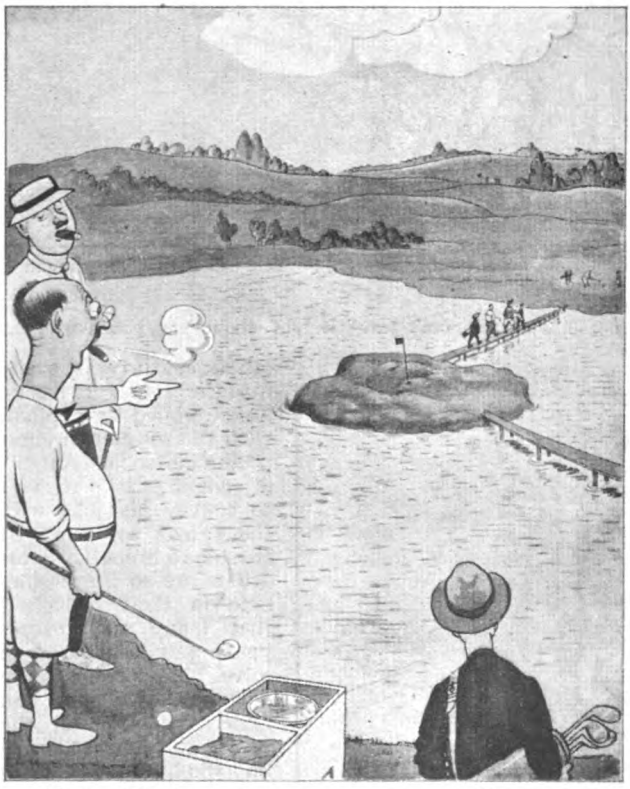
up, they are often an entirely different lot from those embryonic smudges on which the editor reluctantly smiled his approval. It is the custom of the profession for an editor, when a finished sketch is put on his table, to start back and exclaim, "Great Scott! Did I order *that?*" At least, so the art agents will tell you, with an ironic smile.

On the manuscript side of the business there are no "roughs." I should perhaps be more accurate if I said that there is never anything else. All humorous manuscripts are rough: it seems to be the funny man's prerogative. For one author who has a typewriter with all the notes sounding, there are a dozen who seem to have acquired the last relics of some long-abolished Government department.

But although humorous manuscripts are often difficult to read, they are easy to sub-edit. Although it sounds a difficult task, to sub-edit a humorous article is really the easiest thing in the world. All you have to do is to run through it with a big blue pencil, cut out all the author's wittiest lines, change the title, lop down the article by half, change the title again, and send the copy to the printer. At least, that is the author's view of what usually happens. The editor, however, has a different tale to tell. No two people connected with a funny periodical ever quite saw eye to eye. But I have already quoted Addison on humour.

One of the chief joys and chief sorrows in an editor's life is the discovery of new talent. To him, each morning's mail is a Pandora's Box, and he hovers over it with a thrill of kindling hope. His paper-cutter, as he quarries among the long buff envelopes at ten a.m., is wielded like the mattock of a miner who hunts for gold. It is not till later in the forenoon, when he has tested the quartz and found it mostly worthless, that the cold misery of despair settles on him—the grim mood of the editor who wonders where that illusive new humorous genius can be lurking with the bushel that hides his light.

But at the same time the editor must be on his guard. The new humorist, when he does occasionally turn up in the plenitude of his powers, has an awkward trick of fizzling out after his first ardent shower of stars. He may appear to have a new song to sing, but sometimes it is his only one.



Host: "And now we come to our famous island hole."
Guest: "So I perceive. Rather a difficult proposition, eh?"
Host: "Well, I understand there *was* a ball lost here last month!"

But putting aside the lucky emergence of a full-blown genius who at once wins his spurs, and who does stay the course, it may be asked: What chances of success has a young writer or artist in the British humorous periodicals of to-day? Let me answer the question by asking another: What well-known writer or artist of the present time actually burst upon the world as a fully-trained craftsman? W. W. Jacobs, perhaps, among writers; but off-hand I can think of no other. As for artists, I am stumped. What then? How did those people, now so well known, arrive at the position they hold? The answer to this is plain. From P. G. Wodehouse to H. M. Bateman, they sharpened their pens in a modest way on the pages of some periodical until they acquired skill. Their early work had doubtless a freshness and a charm, but it

Little Girl (to visitor): "Are you very old?"
Visitor: "No, dear."
Little Girl: "Have you travelled a great deal?"
Visitor: "No, dear."
Little Girl: "Then when did you get so crumpled?"

was under the kindly eye of some editor that they acquired confidence and experience. There is to-day at least one editor who casts his net wide for the new-comer, and the new-comer is fortunate who falls into it. I mean Reeves Shaw, the man who runs *The Humorist*, from whose pages he has specially selected the illustrations for this article as being, in his opinion, among the best which have appeared in *The Humorist*.

Reeves Shaw is the largest buyer of humorous work in the world. For *The Humorist* and *London Opinion* (which he also controls) he buys over two thousand five hundred drawings annually, not to mention the quantities of similar material which he publishes in his group of magazines issued over the imprint of the House of Newnes.

With Shaw as his editor, the new-comer will receive the training which he so badly needs. It was Hazlitt who said: "A king who is a good-natured man is in a fair way of being a great tyrant." Hazlitt proves his contention about a king; but the cap can also fit an editor. It certainly fits Reeves Shaw. He is the most good-natured tyrant in Fleet Street. You'll hear that he is the hardest editor in London to work for, and it is probably true. And yet, when he turns down your article, with his legs very wide apart upon the hearthrug and his words of doom tempered with a smile, he somehow makes you feel he is conferring an honour: at least, he does you the honour of telling you where you have erred. His criticism carries the weight of experience, and that's the devil of it, for it's ten to one he could have written the article much better himself. The late William Caine, a humorist of quality and a frequent collaborator with H. M. Bateman in work for THE STRAND MAGAZINE, once wrote to Shaw: "A great editor is one who not only makes his paper a success, but who can also keep his contributors happy even while crushing their hopes. It would be impossible to write a nicer letter than this that you've sent me." *Even while crushing their hopes!* Hopes must be crushed sometimes between the upper and nether millstones. To twist Hazlitt's apophthegm, an editor who is a

Rude Boy (to neighbour, who has severely rebuked him for hitting his ball over): "Well, think yourself jolly lucky you don't live next door to Hobbs, then I"

tyrant is a great editor only if he is a good-natured one!

Though Reeves Shaw is a young man in his early forties, he has had over twenty-five years of experience as an editor. He was in complete control of a weekly humorous paper in his 'teens; and even during his youth he seems to have had an eye for coming men. People like A. A. Milne wrote for him in the early days of the century, when both were very young—and very enthusiastic.

I should like to have been present when Shaw took over his first periodical. His office was on the top of Dr. Johnson's house in Bolt Court. The stair was long and difficult, and the ceiling was so low that the young editor scratched matches upon it to light his pipe. But he settled down with all the unshaken confidence of one who regards the world as his arena, determined to make his paper a success. In this connection there is a story told about T. W. H. Crosland, who was then very much in the public eye as the author of "The Unspeakable Scot."

Reeves Shaw concocted a letter to Crosland which was intended to cajole the great man into becoming a contributor. To have such a big gun firing in his columns every week would have assuredly put a feather in the young editor's cap. The letter (which tactfully suggested that Crosland might care to call each week and talk over a subject) was duly posted. The next day Shaw heard strange noises outside his door. He hurried out to the landing, to find his prospective contributor swathed, as always, in those innumerable waistcoats which no man in Fleet Street or out of it had ever been able to count. Crosland was puffing and perspiring, one hand clutching the banisters. "I came to tell ye," he gasped, "that I'd be willing to write for ye at the fee ye mentioned." He mopped his brow and prepared to depart. "But now that I have seen these stairs of yours, I hemmed well won't!"

But at the offices of *The Humorist* there is a smooth and pleasant lift, run by a custodian of singular efficiency, and it has carried up to Reeves Shaw's room most of the famous artists and writers of this decade. It was in 1922 that he brought the paper out—the year after the one in which Humorist won the Derby. But while poor Humorist died soon after his triumph, *The Humorist* has gone from strength to greater strength. At the time, people told Shaw it was a certain failure. They said that it hadn't enough of the purely topical appeal, that it lacked a snappy causerie about London life, that it contained no gossip about either theatres or films, parliaments or prize-fights. Leicester Square, they assured him, was the centre of the universe. Shaw cheerfully replied that in *The Humorist* he was trying to keep away from Leicester Square. His argument was that, in a weekly paper which has to go to press some time before publication, one cannot hope to compete with the admirable gossip of the town so ably conducted by people like "Quex" in *The Evening News*. Discarding these things, in *The Humorist*, he went out for humour, and humour only. That his paper has been a success is sufficient proof that his judgment was sound.

The Wanderer: "Does yer dorg bite, Mum?"
Lady: "Yes, he does, and—oh! Please don't come in, we are so particular about what we feed him on."

Besides Lawson Wood, an artist whom he enticed back to illustrated journalism, the men who have drawn for him include H. M. Bateman, Fougasse, Bert Thomas, G. L. Stampa, W. Heath Robinson, J. H. Dowd, Ridgewell, Will Owen, Alfred Leete, D. L. Ghilchik, Treyer Evans, Arthur Watts, Charles Grave, Wallis Mills, and a host of other well-known people. There are few humorous writers of any standard to-day who have

not contributed to one or other of his papers.

Let us meet some of Reeves Shaw's amusing team.

Take, first of all, the humorous writer, Ashley Sterne. I think he must be the world's champion mixer. He could adorn a ducal dinner table one night and hobnob with the toughs of Charley Brown's public-house down Limehouse way the next. I have seen him play bowls in braces on a village green, and his booming shout of "Good wood!" rang across the golden turf in the authentic drone of that same countryside. Every humorist, I suppose, is a bit of a chameleon. He is swift to assume the accent of different men's minds. He can quickly see things through the other fellow's eyes. It is this almost uncanny insight that gives Sterne the power to body forth the foibles, not only of the day, but of the period.

Indignant Gentleman: "Is that your little brother out there?"
Small Girl: "No; I just minds 'im."

A whale for work is Alfred Leete. One might be tempted to call him an old-stager now, though he would vigorously deny it himself. His looks would also deny it, though one must never mind an artist's appearance. As the late W. L. George used to say, while the eminent authors of fifty years ago tried to look like authors, now they try to look like stockbrokers. Alfred Leete looks like one of the younger members of Lloyd's in a soft collar. He combines the spick and span with an easy air of Saturday-afternoon comfort. His work is in unison; and while he knows to a minute how long any job will take him, he finds drawing the jolliest occupation in existence. It is a joy to watch Leete giving birth to an idea. He vigorously seizes the stub of a pencil, and, with a smile which is his own copyright, jots down the whimsicality before your eyes, breaking forth now and then into a current of unsyncopated laughter. Like Chesterton, Leete was born to laugh at his own jokes. But, then, they're well worth laughing at! And the laughter evoked by Alfred Leete's humour isn't at all the grim laughter of the gods upon Olympus, but the deep chesty chuckle of the plain man who knows what he wants and is prepared to plank down his twopence to get it.

The Vicar: "Ah, Mrs. Miggs. I too have had to pinch all my life to make both ends meet."
Mrs. Miggs: "Lor', sir, ain't it lucky you were never caught!"

But Leete hasn't got that actuarial — that Throgmorton Street — look in his eye for nothing. I have said that he knows exactly how long any job will take him; but he sometimes underestimates his speed. An editor of a monthly magazine once sent Leete a short story for illustration, and

added the usual warning not to be too long about it. The story happened to catch an outgoing mail and was delivered to Alfred Leete in Kensington that night after dinner. Leete thought he might occupy a pleasant hour reading the story; and having finished it, he continued to amuse himself by doing the illustrations. Before turning into bed, he took the dog for a run round the square. More to get them out of the way than anything else, he posted the drawings at the same time. In his office next morning at ten o'clock the editor sat back with a gasp. It was customary to allow an artist about a fortnight to read a story, select appropriate incidents, and do the drawings. Leete had done the whole job between the time of the office closing one night and opening next morning!

Just before the big Transport Strike of 1919, the editor of a social and political weekly, for which Alfred Leete did a regular cartoon, found himself in an awkward predicament. He had to go to press with an issue of his paper on the forenoon after the strike was to be definitely declared either on or off. He could not tell which way the cat might jump; it was impossible to prejudge the situation. In the circumstances, a cartoon on some subject of secondary importance was prepared. As a matter of fact, the strike was declared on at midnight, and tubes and buses were stopped. Alfred Leete got the news in the early hours of the morning. He sat down and turned out a slashing cartoon on the topic, and then started to foot-slog the twelve miles from the distant London suburb where he was then living. He arrived at the office just in time to get his cartoon on the machines. That is zeal; and to the zealous all other things are added. As a result of industry coupled with high ability, Alfred Leete is—and deserves to be—one of the most highly-paid humorous artists in London.

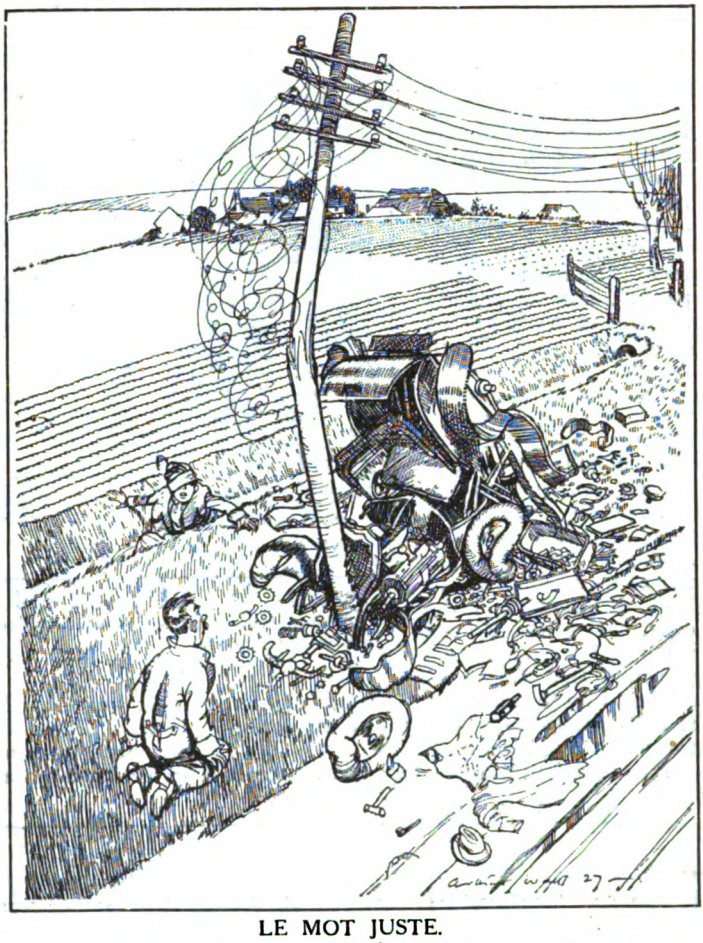
Another man who rises early is D. L. Ghilchik. With Ghilchik, Reeves Shaw's difficulty is to know how long to hold the work up. No popular fad, no catchword, appears but "D. L. G." has captured it and embalmed in a pictorial jest. His sketch satirizing, say, the loose-jointed contortions of the latest dance is ready before most people have awakened to the fact that the new arrival has just been heralded on the saxophones. The up-to-the-minute joke goes down all right in London. There they have learned overnight all about the dearth of bananas or the high-jinks of the Bright Young Things; but in the provinces, where real culture is perhaps more prevalent and the mass-mind more stable, the fads and crotchets of veering fashion take longer to penetrate. Thus Shaw is compelled to consider very carefully the appropriate hour for loosing off a jest that is hot from Ghilchik's easel.

Than "D. L. G." there is no artist more

'Harold quick! Take his number!"

painstaking. Everything he sees is grist for his mill; everything he hears is a seed-thought for some future joke. Once Reeves Shaw took him to the races at Sandown Park, and Ghilchik turned up with a gigantic sketch-book. Shaw was horrified; he had come to enjoy himself. But to Ghilchik a race meeting was a new experience at that time, and nothing would persuade him to leave his sketch-book behind. It dawned on Shaw that the pair of them looked like a bookmaker with his clerk coming to select their position. Ghilchik was only constrained to take his enormous sketch-book back to the car when a man came up to them, held out a pound note, and said: "What price Razor, guv'nor?"

Talking of rapid but painstaking workers, a man who combines speed with subtlety is Bert Thomas. He is a Welshman, short and dark and eager. His name became widely known as the cartoonist of *London Opinion* under the editorship of Lincoln Springfield, that most kindly and brotherly of Savages, whom many famous writers and artists are to-day proud to call patron and friend. Bert Thomas, though temperamental, has his temperament on a tight leading-rein, and can knock off a drawing in the office while you wait with the same adroit skill that serves him in his studio at Church Farm, out Pinner way.



LE MOT JUSTE.

Mrs. Henpeck (from force of habit): "John, we really can't go on like this."

One of Reeves Shaw's most assiduous contributors is J. J. Bell. Only the other day Bell received a host of congratulations on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of "Wee Macgreegor," a book which shares with Barrie's "Sentimental Tommy" the honour of being our finest delineation of a young Scots boy. J. J. Bell, who is also a valued contributor to THE STRAND MAGAZINE, lives at Hillhead, Glasgow. He gives public readings from his "Mr. and Mrs. Craw," a book which appeared chapter by chapter in *The Humorist*, and which he dedicated to his editor. But before Shaw is permitted to see the copy which arrives with such punctuality, Bell reads every word of it to his family circle. If approved, off it goes on its journey South; if not, it is ruthlessly scrapped. Behind J. J. Bell's quiet, genial manner there lies a deal of moral courage.

J. Jefferson Farjeon, author of various books and the popular play "No. 17," has a wonderful knack for the short, bright article which Reeves Shaw uses so largely in *The Humorist*. Farjeon is the most modest fellow you could hope to meet, and his industry is a thing to marvel at. In addition to humour, he produces all manner of literary work, and indeed there are few fields of modern journalism where he has not ventured with his pen.

In fact, our younger dramatists seem rather to rally round Reeves Shaw. Among his more or less regular contributors he

includes Keble Howard, author of "Lord Babs"; Basil Macdonald Hastings, to whom "The New Sin" brought fame; Ben Travers, whose farces at the Aldwych Theatre, where his "Thark" is running now, have earned a fortune; H. F. Maltby, who wrote "The Rotters"; Florence A. Kilpatrick, now a popular novelist as well as dramatist; and Harris Deans.

Deans used to be on the staff of *London Opinion;* but because of the demands on his pen he has relinquished the blue pencil. Besides witty sketches for *The Humorist,* he does an immense amount of brilliant dramatic criticism. If it was Horace who laid down the principle that the most forcible way to impart truth is by laughter, it is Harris Deans who is the most successful in carrying it out.

Visitor: "Come and have a drink with me."
Oldest Inhabitant. "Noa, thank'ee, zur. I be in trainin' fer our village sports."

But probably I have forgotten more of these whimsical fellows than I have remembered. There is D'Egville, the pictorial exponent of winter sports—Harry Rountree, who can draw a funny animal with the same skill that he drives a golf ball — Lawrence du Garde, now as well known for his wireless talks as for his witty journalism — and Maurice Lane-Norcott, one of the very cleverest of our younger humorists.

Irritable Author: "Now, what the deuce are *you* stamping about the place for?"

"It is to be regretted," said Max O'Rell, "that the Governments of the world are not carried on by humorists." The British public is devoutly grateful that at least *The Humorist* is!

Who Killed Castelvetri?

By GILBERT FRANKAU

Illustrated by STANLEY LLOYD

I.

HER name is Kyra Sokratesco. She is a Roumanian—*petite*, and rather lovely. And unkind people on the Côte des Maures, which lies west of the more civilized French Riviera, are apt to call her "Gilbert's girl friend." The Chief of the Secret Police of Toulon, however, knows better; and it was at his instigation, with my wife's full cognizance, that Kyra and I spent a day and a night in our Local Assize Town—and disagreed all the time.

"Camille Oustric is innocent," began I, as soon as we reached Draguignan. "He acted in self-defence."

"Camille Oustric is a hired bully and a cold-blooded assassin," began she. "If this were England he, and others with him, would hang."

Our friend of the Secret Police of Toulon said, "I feel with you, Mademoiselle. But where is there proof for a Court?"

The Court at Draguignan is not impressive—bare walls, bare wood, a dais for the Procureur de la République and the three judges, a box with twelve arm-chairs for the jury, a *banc* and a *barreau* for the witnesses, another *banc* for the accused.

When Kyra and I entered the Court-room, the accused was already seated between two gendarmes. He resembled his pictures in the newspapers—a powerfully-built man in his forties, sailorish, with a high dome of bald forehead, big cheek-bones, and an immense brown moustache.

"His eyebrows twitch," observed Kyra, as we took our places in the Press-box. "He is frightened."

KYRA SOKRATESCO, THE CHARACTER-READING DETECTIVE.

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" So would you be," I retorted. " Twenty years' penal servitude in French Guiana is worse than death."

We continued sparring—while Counsel for the Defence, little and moustachioed, shook hands with his client ; while Counsel for the Partie Civile (the relatives of the victim, who claim damages for his murder), big and bearded, was arranging his *dossier ;* and while the *Greffier* called over the jury-roll. Even the tinny bell and the " *Messieurs, la Cour,*" which heralded the entrance of the red-robed " Monsieur le Président," his two brother judges, and the Procureur de la République, bald and clean-shaven, only reduced us to whispers, until the jury had been sworn.

For our disagreement had been of long standing—ever since the first report of the case.

THE case, as the jury now heard it from the charge-sheet, was rather sordid, but seemed of the simplest. Camille Oustric, owner of a grocer's shop, had shot his brother-in-law, Josef Castelvetri, a *sous-officier* in the French Navy, on the night of the eleventh September at the Villa Fleurie in Toulon. Two witnesses—Oustric's sister, and his sister's fifteen-year-old boy—had witnessed the whole of the shooting. His sister's lover, who owned the villa, had seen the beginning of it. Oustric himself confessed to it—pleading, a plea confirmed by all three witnesses, Self-Defence.

" Tell your story," said the President, after the charge had been read over ; " and please speak up."

" It was like this," said Oustric, rising, and his robust voice carried conviction. " On the night he died my brother-in-law should have come to us before dinner. We waited until nine o'clock for him—his wife, my sister ; his son Jacques ; Monsieur de Borneville, and I. At nine we dined on the veranda. At ten there came a loud knocking on the outside door. I told Jacques to answer the door. He went. A moment later he staggered back, bleeding from a blow on the forehead. ' Papa has killed me,' he cried. My brother-in-law followed. He had a pistol in his hand. ' Woman, I will stand this dishonour no longer,' he shouted. Then he fired twice. My sister fell wounded. Monsieur de Borneville jumped from the veranda. Thinking he would fire again, I rushed at Josef ; I caught his wrists. ' For God's sake ! ' I implored. But he was mad, Monsieur. He fired again —at me ; and the bullet pierced the ceiling. I remembered, then, that my sister had a pistol. It was in a drawer of her writing-table. Before he could fire a fourth shot I was at the writing-table. I wrenched the drawer open. I seized my sister's pistol. I emptied it at him. God forgive me for doing it—but Josef would have killed her. What else could I do ? "

" And do *you* believe that rigmarole," whispered Kyra.

" I do," said I. " Or at any rate the essentials of it. The woman was in danger of her life. He defended her."

To which Kyra retorted with the Roumanian equivalent of " Pah ! "

The President, however, though he examined at great length, did not succeed in shaking the prisoner's testimony.

" Yes," said Oustric in effect, " I admit that I knew of my sister's relations with Monsieur de Borneville ; I admit that Monsieur de Borneville took me to the villa that evening ; I admit that I went there to protect my sister should her husband become violent. But I was unarmed. I had no intention of killing. And the thing happened exactly as I have said."

" You say you were unarmed ? " was the President's last question. " Yet it has been proved that you possessed a pistol."

" Not a pistol, Monsieur. Only a very old revolver, which Monsieur le Chef de la Sûreté found where I told him he would find it, under the counter of my shop."

When Oustric sat down on his *banc*, while a doctor, pure Dickens from the cut of his old-fashioned coat to the set of his old-fashioned spectacles, came pawkily to the wooden rail of the witnesses, I couldn't help being a little sorry for the Chef de la Sûreté. And the medical evidence made me sorrier still. For after describing Castelvetri's three wounds at length, our Dickensian doctor detailed his examination of Madame Castelvetri, who had been shot. " In the right thigh, gentlemen of the jury ; a clean wound at close range ; the bullet entering five centimetres higher than its point of exit "—a fact which had hitherto been in dispute.

" *Tu entends, ma chère,*" I whispered, " that blows our friend's theory of her having been hit by a ricochet to atoms."

" I admit it," whispered back Kyra. " But his theory is not mine."

The next evidence, read by the Procureur de la République, was new to both of us—but failed, in my opinion, to throw much light on the case. An architect named Meyrowitz, whose house was eighty yards away from the villa, had heard the shooting—first one shot ; then, after a short interval, a second ; then a positive fusillade. This witness had also heard de Borneville run past his window, and a woman's voice calling after him, " Marcel ! Marcel ! Come back."

Kyra, I may say, seemed to think this deposition of some importance. She

smiled to herself as she made a note of it; and nodded to our friend the Chef de la Sûreté just before he took oath at the bar.

"At five-thirty a.m. on the morning of the eleventh September," said our friend, "I was called to the Toulon Hospital. A man had been shot. He wished to make a special deposition. So I went at once. When I got there the man, Josef Castelvetri, was on the point of death. He signed his deposition, however, which is as follows: 'It was my fault. I was mad. I wounded her. Then Camille shot me.'"

"And after that?" prompted the President.

"After that I rang up the City Police, and told them to make full inquiries at the Villa Fleurie, from which—the ambulance driver told me—the man had been brought in."

"The City Police will tell us the rest, I presume?"

"*Oui, Monsieur le Président, oui.*"

Our friend, who never appears personally either for or against a prisoner unless, as in this case, circumstances force him to, retired without glancing at us; and a rather foolish-looking City policeman took his place.

The police, it appeared, had gone to the Villa Fleurie immediately on receipt of our friend's telephone-message—but not alone. With them had gone the accused, who had already given himself up and made his confession, and the three principal witnesses, who had reported at the police-station at the same time. At the villa, everything—including a bullet-hole in the ceiling—had confirmed the accused's statement. Both pistols had been left on the dining-table.

"Both of them were seven-shot Brownings," said the City policeman. "Six-point-thirty-five millimetres. Both had been recently fired. One, manufactured at Herbstahl in Belgium, contained three cartridges in the magazine and one in the chamber. This, I was told, had belonged to the victim. The other, marked M.A.B., of French make, belonged, as she admitted, to the woman, and was empty. That is all I know."

But a second policeman, carrying the tale a step further, brought out the one point which—as I had always admitted—was against the accused.

"Acting on instructions," said this second policeman, "I proceeded to the hospital and examined the clothes of the victim. In the pockets I found twenty-nine francs and a few centimes, a watch, a pocket-handkerchief, seventeen six-point-thirty-five millimetre cartridges, and a magazine for a Browning pistol."

"And the mark on that magazine?" asked the Procureur de la République, who had hitherto foregone his right to examine.

"The mark on the magazine, Monsieur, was M.A.B."

SINCE my acquaintance with Kyra and her friend of the Sûreté, who has particularly requested that I should not describe him, I have witnessed many "scenes" in French Law Courts. But rarely such a one as now occurred between Monsieur le Procureur and Counsel for the Defence.

"I protest," screamed Counsel for the Defence, rising. "And I shall continue to protest. This evidence is trivial. It can have no bearing on the issue. The Herbstahl and the M.A.B. pistol are absolutely identical. The same magazines, the same cartridges fit either of them."

"Quite so," screamed back the Procureur. "We admit it. That, we say, is how your client made his mistake."

"Mistake! But it is you, Monsieur le Procureur, who make a mistake when you try, as the Juge d'Instruction tried, to prejudice an innocent man, my unfortunate client——"

"Gentlemen," interrupted the President, "gentlemen——"

But the President's interruption went unheeded—till his bell rang for the "suspension of debates."

During this suspension Kyra fell into one of those moods which I can only describe as "Kyraish," her lovely eyes half-closed, her lips pursed, one thin little hand drawing idle designs in her notebook—and I, still more or less convinced of Oustric's innocence, went out to have a cigarette.

Our friend of the Sûreté was outside; and I condoled with him a little. He replied, "If Mademoiselle does not aid us, I fear this villain, and also his accomplices, will go free."

When I came back, the Court seemed much fuller; Messieurs les Avocats had apparently made up their differences; and a third policeman, a Commissioner, stood at the bar saying: "Yes, Monsieur. When the accused came to my office on the morning of the twelfth September, I took all four statements separately. I noticed nothing peculiar about any of the four people except that Monsieur de Borneville had a bruise, caused, as he said, by striking himself against the hood of his motor-car, on the bridge of his nose."

Two gunsmiths, contradicting one another, as all expert witnesses in all countries, followed the Commissioner. Both, however, questioned by the Defence, "If a customer purchases a six-point-thirty-five millimetre Herbstahl pistol and asks for a spare

"I protest. This evidence is trivial."

magazine with it, is he not as liable to be supplied with an M.A.B. magazine as a Herbstahl ? " answered, " Yes. That is so. The magazines are interchangeable."

At which Kyra frowned.

II.

KYRA was still frowning while we took our luncheon ; and with her, too, I condoled a little, for being over-imaginative—as indeed she is.

" There is no mystery in this case," I told her. " It is all perfectly straightforward."

She said, quietly, " My friend, no case with a strong sex-motive behind it is absolutely straightforward. I am a woman—and I know."

At twenty minutes past two the judges' guard of soldiers came marching by us ; by half-past we were again in Court. The Court was fuller than ever. Looking back over my shoulder at the crowd pressing to the rails behind us, I was reminded of the French Revolution—as reconstructed by the American film. But the crowd stood orderly, and only the tiniest shiver of anticipation ran through it when de Borneville, giving Kyra a glance as he passed the Press-box, came to the bar.

A highly-strung little man, I judged de Borneville. He had the long nose of the aristocrat, the " tooth-brush " moustache of an English officer, and curiously soft, rather imaginative brown eyes. He gave his age as thirty-nine, unmarried ; his profession as " landowner " ; took the oath calmly, and turned to the jury at once.

" Before I make my deposition," he began, " I want to assure you, gentlemen of the jury, of my deep regret at having been the unwilling cause of this tragedy. Also of my determination—once I am assured that Camille Oustric is found innocent—of compensating the Castelvetri family for the bereavement which they have suffered —as, indeed, I would have done already had they not brought suit against the accused."

" *Quelle blague,*" whispered Kyra. But I could see that de Borneville had impressed the jury ; and the favourable impression deepened as he went calmly on.

His relations with the woman he admitted frankly, making no excuse for himself. " What would you ? We are all human. Despite the difference in our position, I loved her. I still love her. We should have married, had not her husband been an ardent Catholic ; had he not refused to grant her, as most men would have done, a divorce."

" During the two years you and his wife lived together," interrupted the President, " you had often asked Castelvetri to divorce her ? "

" Yes, often. Whenever he came home from a cruise."

" He came home from a cruise on the tenth of September, and the purpose of your meeting on the night of the eleventh was to discuss the same topic ? "

" Precisely."

" And because you were afraid Castelvetri might become violent, you took Oustric with you ? "

" That is so. I am, as you will see, by no means a Hercules." And de Borneville looked towards the foreman of the jury, who smiled.

After that he described the start of the actual shooting, telling the same story as Oustric, quietly, but this time making an excuse for himself. " I ran away after the first shot," he admitted. " It looks cowardly, I know, but I fancied that Castelvetri would follow—that I would draw his fire."

" You ran for help ? " suggested the President. " That hardly bears out what you have just told us."

" I only ran for help after I heard the fusillade, after I guessed that a tragedy must have happened. It seemed to me that the sooner I got some independent witness the better. As soon as I had secured that witness I jumped into my car ; I drove for the doctor, for the ambulance. At six o'clock I reported myself to the police."

De Borneville, under the President's examination, under that of the Partie Civile and the Procureur, remained imperturbable. The impression he continued to give was that of a man in the most cruel of difficulties, behaving in the correctest way. When asked, " Was Oustric armed when you took him to the villa ? " he retorted, instantly : " Had I thought arms necessary, there would have been no need for Oustric. In the war I was not quite unused to firearms. I could have carried a pistol myself."

Only once, or so it seemed to me, did he display any hesitancy, and that at the Procureur's question : " We have been told that Castelvetri, just before he fired, shouted : ' Woman, I will stand this dishonour no longer.' Do you confirm that, or not ? "

" It may have been so," said de Borneville then. " He certainly said something. But of the actual words I have no recollection. And I do not think he shouted. I would rather describe it that he hissed."

Asked, " Were you not amazed that Castelvetri should have struck his own son ? " he answered : " No. The son had always sided with his mother, you see " ; and shortly after retired to the *banc*.

" The clever devil ! " whispered Kyra, watching him ; and in a minute or so the woman stood at the bar.

She was dressed in black, fairly fashionably. A tall creature, dark-haired and slim of figure, with long, expressive hands. Her eyes were big, and held something of fear in them. But her voice, as she gave her age, " Thirty-seven," sounded clear, self-certain, and somehow sweet.

" As the victim's widow," explained the President, " this woman cannot give sworn testimony. But she has volunteered a statement, and she can be interrogated on it. Madame, you may now proceed."

THE widow's statement tallied, to a nicety, with Oustric's and de Borneville's. Examination revealed no flaws in it. Only at the end were the spectators —Kyra and I, of course, were prepared for it—treated to a surprise.

" In view of what you have just told us," said the President, " how comes it that you told one witness, ' I did it. I killed my husband ' ? And how comes it that your son told the same witness almost the same thing ? "

" I can explain that very easily," the woman answered. " Indeed, I have done so twice already. As the moral culprit, it was my intention to take this crime on my own shoulders. I wanted to save my brother. Therefore, I told my son——"

" To lie, madame ? "

" To lie in what I thought a good cause, Monsieur le Président."

" But your son had seen everything ? "

" *Oui*."

" You persist in that ? It is claimed, you know, that he told another witness, at his father's funeral, ' I saw nothing. I was not in the veranda. I was outside the door.' "

" Jacques saw everything," asseverated the woman. " The suggestion that he was not in the veranda is mere gossip."

" That," retorted the President, " we shall see."

A little later, after only one admission, secured by the Partie Civile, " Yes. I called at my brother's shop to buy my usual provisions on the morning of the eleventh," that seemed to me in any way pertinent, the woman joined her lover on the bench of the witnesses, and her son, Castelvetri's orphan, came in.

" He, too," said the President, " cannot give sworn testimony." And I saw Kyra's eyebrows go up as the boy began.

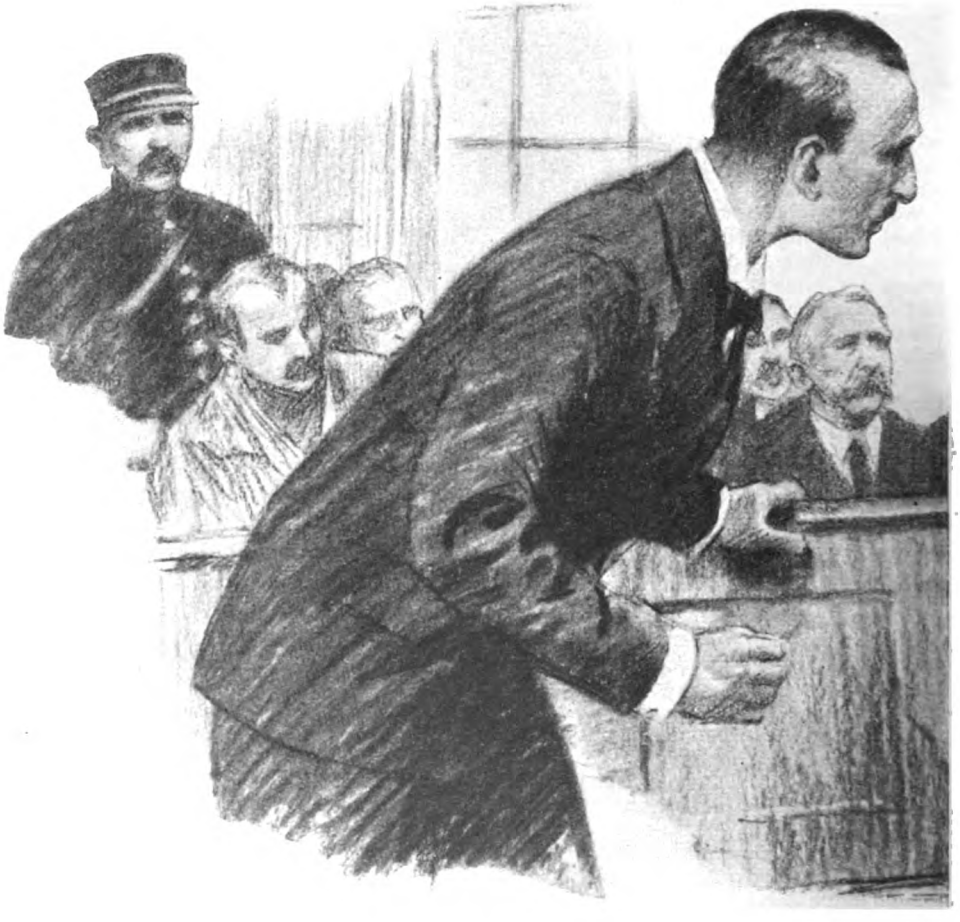
The boy, very strong, dark-haired, stocky of figure, dark-eyed, but not, or so I thought, over-intelligent, made his deposition stoutly. His father had hit him with his pistol-butt. He had seen his father shoot at his mother ;

seen his uncle struggling with his father; seen his uncle snatch the pistol from the drawer. When he had finished this deposition the President again " suspended the debates."

" Very unusual before his own examination," I commented to Kyra.

his second deposition on oath, it tallied—word for word, as a hidden shorthand writer proved to us that evening—with his first !

" *Tu entends, mon cher,*" whispered Kyra, triumphantly ; and I, " Supposing he did learn his statement by heart, it proves



' Very," admitted Kyra. " I suspect our friend's hand in it. However, we shall see."

We saw our friend's hand, and could not help chuckling a little at the subtlety of him, when the bell rang, and the President, full of apologies, turned to the jury saying, " Gentlemen, I am very sorry. I made a mistake. A dead man's son or daughter can give sworn testimony, either for or against his murderer. I am therefore going to ask this witness to repeat what he has just told you. But this time on oath."

And when Jacques Castelvetri repeated nothing." Nor did the three-fold examination prove very much more.

" I said mother had done it because mother told me to," admitted Jacques Castelvetri.

" Then you lied ? "

" Yes. To save uncle."

" And there is a witness who maintains you told him, ' I saw nothing.' "

' Never, Monsieur le Procureur."

" You are on your oath."

' On my oath, Monsieur."

" You maintain that ? "

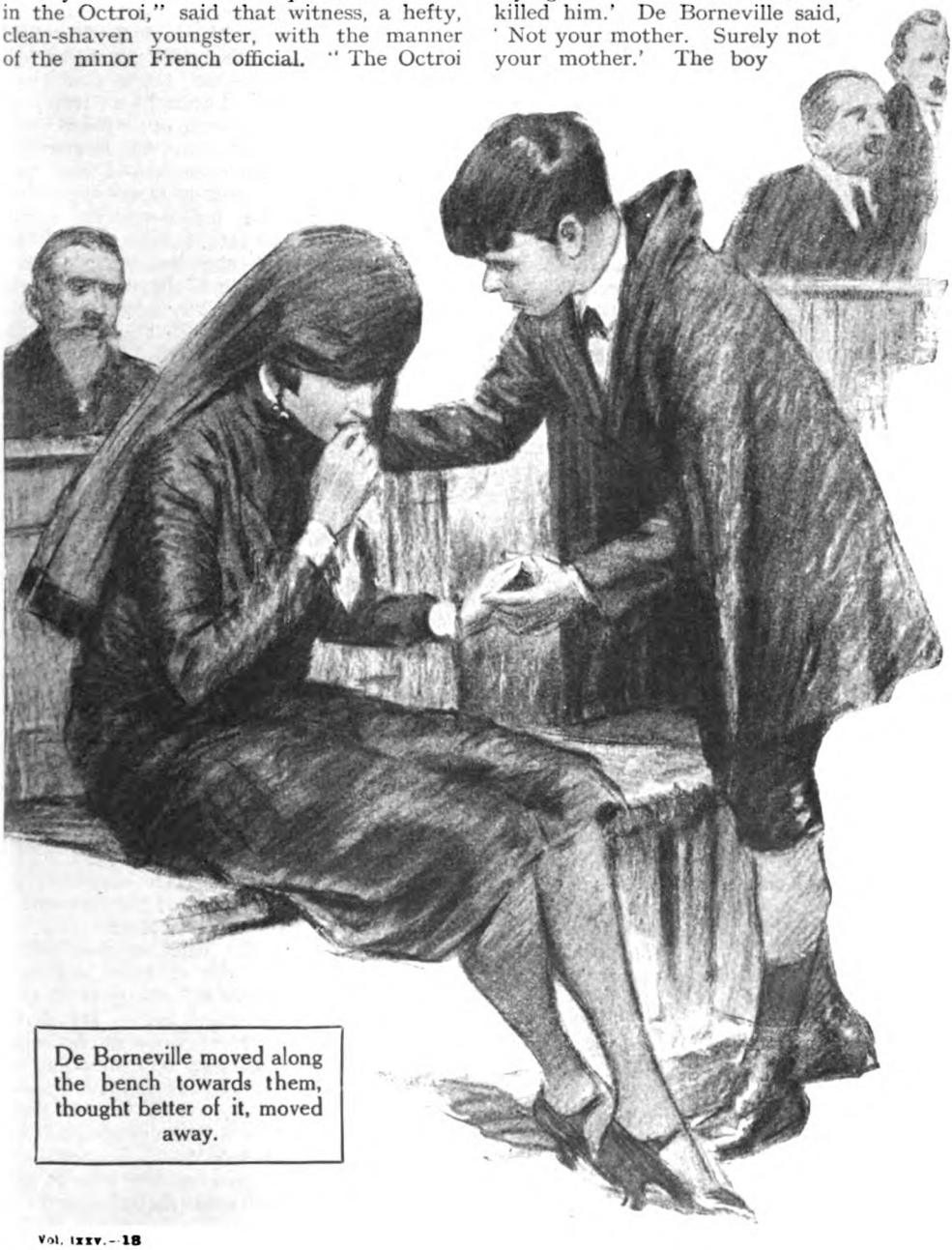
' Absolutely."

" Very well."

The boy, his tale told, went to his mother. He took her hand; held it. The woman was crying a little. He tried to comfort her. De Borneville moved along the bench towards them, thought better of it, moved away.

I called Kyra's attention to the humanity of the picture they made. She whispered, "Yes. They are great actors," as the next, perhaps the all-important, witness came in.

"My name is Henri Piquart, and I am in the Octroi," said that witness, a hefty, clean-shaven youngster, with the manner of the minor French official. "The Octroi (Town Customs) Station is about a quarter of a mile from the Villa Fleurie. At about ten-fifteen on the night of September the eleventh Monsieur de Borneville, who was unknown to me, rushed in. There had been *une bagarre*, he told me. He could find no policeman; would I come at once? I went with Monsieur de Borneville, but only after he had proved his identity to me. When we reached his villa, a boy ran out to us, crying, 'He is dead. Mother has killed him.' De Borneville said, 'Not your mother. Surely not your mother.' The boy



De Borneville moved along the bench towards them, thought better of it, moved away.

answered, ' Yes. Yes. Mother.' Then we went in."

The man from the Octroi described the scene—Castelvetri on his back, his wife bleeding, Oustric with a bandage, trying to stanch her wound.

" We saw that the man was not yet dead," he went on. " De Borneville, who seemed very frightened, said, ' I have my car here. I will go for the doctor, for the ambulance.' He took the boy with him. And I remained."

" At de Borneville's suggestion ? " interrupted the President.

" Yes. After he had gone, Castelvetri seemed about to recover consciousness. I sent Camille Oustric to get water for him. While he was away, the woman said to me, ' I will tell you how it happened. I shot him. It was an accident. All the shots in the pistol seemed to go off at once.' Castelvetri was muttering something then ; and Oustric had come back with the water. Oustric said, ' Do not believe her. I did it.' When I gave Castelvetri the water, he opened his eyes and muttered, ' Camille, you have killed me.' Castelvetri seemed in great pain. I did what I could for him. But it was difficult, because of the woman. She seemed quite beside herself. I gathered that there must have been some terrible quarrel. She kept on flinging herself down by her husband, and reproaching him—about some other woman. This went on all the time till de Borneville returned with the doctor. I was very tired by then. I thought I had done my duty. And after giving my name to de Borneville, I went away."

III.

" IF that is the whole case for the prosecution," said I, some hours later, " it fails."

We were sitting, I must admit, in Kyra's bedroom—she on the edge of the bed, legs crossed, a cigarette between her fingers ; I close to her, a brandy-and-soda at my side. Unfortunately for the unkind ones, however, there was a third party present—our friend of the Secret Police.

" We have other evidence for to-morrow," said he. " But only circumstantial. Our main witness, the one who overheard the boy say, ' I saw nothing,' has sent a doctor's certificate to say he is not well enough to attend. All we can actually prove is that Oustric occasionally carried a pistol."

" A pistol," interrupted Kyra, " or a revolver ? "

" Among the lower orders in France, mademoiselle, the terms are unfortunately synonymous."

" I know. It is a pity. And de Borneville's payments to Oustric ? "

" He has always admitted that he financed Oustric's grocery shop."

" He admits everything, that devil."

" Except his complicity in the death of Castelvetri."

" His complicity. And the woman's. She visited her brother that morning. Obviously to arrange the crime."

" But if it was no crime ? " I interrupted. " If it all happened as they say it did ? "

" In that case," Kyra flashed at me, " the wrong magazine would not have been in the dead man's pocket ; there would have been no statement, ' I shot him ; it was an accident,' from the woman ; there would have been no bruise on de Borneville's nose ; the boy's evidence would not have been word-perfect—and de Borneville would have been at the police-station several hours, three at any rate, before six o'clock.

" And besides," she went on, " their story, though plausible, is slightly ridiculous. How could Oustric have wrenched the drawer open to get at the pistol ? The moment he let go of Castelvetri he would have been shot down. And then there is Meyrowitz who heard the woman cry, ' Marcel, come back ' ; but never heard the loud knock or the boy's ' Papa has killed me ' or Castelvetri's ' Woman, I will stand this dishonour no longer.'

" And what of Castelvetri's mental state before he went to the villa ? " She turned to our friend. " Have you no evidence on that point ? Somebody must have seen him, spoken with him ? "

" Only his father. And his father is the Partie Civile. He can give no evidence. Castelvetri, it appears, was always very reticent about the whole position."

" Didn't he say anything to his father ? "

" Nothing of importance—except that he had an appointment with de Borneville, who was still bothering him about the divorce."

" Castelvetri did not mean to grant the divorce, then ? "

" No, mademoiselle. He was far too devout. And, as you know, the last man in the world to contemplate violence——"

" Yet he shot his wife in the leg," I interrupted.

" I refuse to believe it," snapped Kyra.

" Then who did shoot her ? De Borneville ? Oustric ? Her own son, perhaps ? Dash it all, her husband himself admitted on his death-bed, and to our friend here——"

" Castelvetri's deposition," said Kyra, " merely proves him a gentleman—and that he died loving his wife."

In all the detective stories I have ever read—and I have read many, mostly to

please her, since my acquaintance with Kyra—the narrator is made out a half-wit. And as such I, of all people, was treated during the next half-hour. Kyra and her pet policeman simply left me out of their discussion—while they pored over plans and photographs of the veranda dining-room, over the two pistols and the ten used cartridge cases, and the whole common-or-garden paraphernalia of their trade.

" You're wasting your time," I said at last—and, I fear, irritably. " Granted all the flaws in the story—and I can see them as well as you can—it will be good enough for the jury. The woman's evidence is unshaken ; the boy's also. And your Juge d'Instruction, when he made his original inquiry, must have been a perfect fool."

" In what way ? " queried our friend, with his usual politeness.

" *Eh bien*," said I. " Jacques says, they all say, that his father hit him with his pistol-butt ; that he staggered in bleeding. A blow like that would have left a scar——"

" It did," retorted our friend. " The Juge d'Instruction had it examined by a doctor. It was a superficial head wound, not serious, but such as might easily cause profuse bleeding——"

" And such as might have been inflicted by a pistol-butt ? "

" Quite possibly. Since it was under the hair."

A silence followed ; and in that silence I looked at Kyra, still smoking, legs crossed, on her bed.

" You're very clever, Gilbert," she said at last. " Almost as clever as de Borneville. But you can't get over the fact that he had eight hours to concoct this story—and that it was supremely in the interest of all of them that Castelvetri should die."

" Not in the boy's," I protested. " Not in Oustric's."

" In theirs too. Financially. De Borneville is a rich man, remember."

" You make the boy out a monster, Kyra."

" The boy still thinks his mother did it. He thinks he is lying to save both her and his uncle. That is why he lies so well."

Another silence followed—with our friend fingering his copy of the *dossier*, and Kyra at her most Kyraish, a picture of applied concentration, cigarette extinguished, eyes closed.

" De Borneville's war record ? " she asked, when her eyes opened. " You say it is a good one. About how good ? Was he ever wounded ? "

" Never." Our friend's eyes were on the *dossier*. " Towards the end he had a touch of shell-shock, and got three months' leave for it. But he returned to duty, and was promoted Major for conspicuous coolness and ingenuity during a night raid, almost single-handed, into the enemy's lines."

" H'm ! " said Kyra. " That helps."

She closed her eyes again, and sat back for a long time, apparently dreaming. Then she said, " Shell-shock ! That explains his bolting. He must have got his nerve back rather quickly. Yet he lost it again, according to Piquart, when the boy said, ' Mother has killed him.' She lost her nerve, too. And so did Oustric. There was no need to empty the whole pistol. Or to plant all those cartridges. I wonder if we dare try it ? One could in Roumania. But here ! Here ! "

IV.

BOTH as a law-abiding English citizen and as a friend of France, whose justice in the main is also equitable, I experience a certain diffidence in relating the events of the next hour.

Our friend, when Kyra first broached her plan to him, would have none of it. " It is impossible," he said. " Impossible. Even by the Sûreté, it could not be done."

" But he is sleeping in this very hotel," protested Kyra. " I have only to send a note along the corridor."

" He will not come for your note."

" He will—if he is guilty." And in the end, after long argument, Kyra got her way.

She showed us her note before she rang for the waiter ; and though my sense of fair-play revolted, I had to admit the thing a masterpiece. " All is known," it read. " To-morrow, when the Court opens, you and she will be arrested. The Sûreté are watching. Do not try to find me. Be careful.—A FRIEND."

Before she rang for the waiter, too, she made us hide ourselves ; so that it was half-stifled in a slip of a bathroom that I heard her say : " For the gentleman in twenty-eight, *garçon*. You are to wait until you see him open it. If he asks you from whom it comes, you are to say nothing. When you have delivered the letter, return here."

" Subtle," whispered our friend. " It is a thousand to one he will follow the waiter." And a moment later Kyra turned out her bedroom light.

We waited breathless—and both nervous. We heard the waiter come back ; heard Kyra say, sleepily, " *Merci. C'est bon.* My *petit déjeuner* at eight-thirty, please," and about five minutes later, a cautious knock.

Kyra did not answer that knock ; and after an interval it repeated itself. At the third repetition she called out, as one startled : " Who is it ? Who is it ? " and we heard her run to the door.

She gave a tiny cry as she opened the door ;

and presently we heard her say, " But this is madness. Madness. They are watching you." Then the door closed, and we knew that de Borneville was inside the darkened room.

" Who are you ? " he asked, and from the tone his teeth must have been chattering.

" A friend. I told you. But it is folly—folly what you have just done."

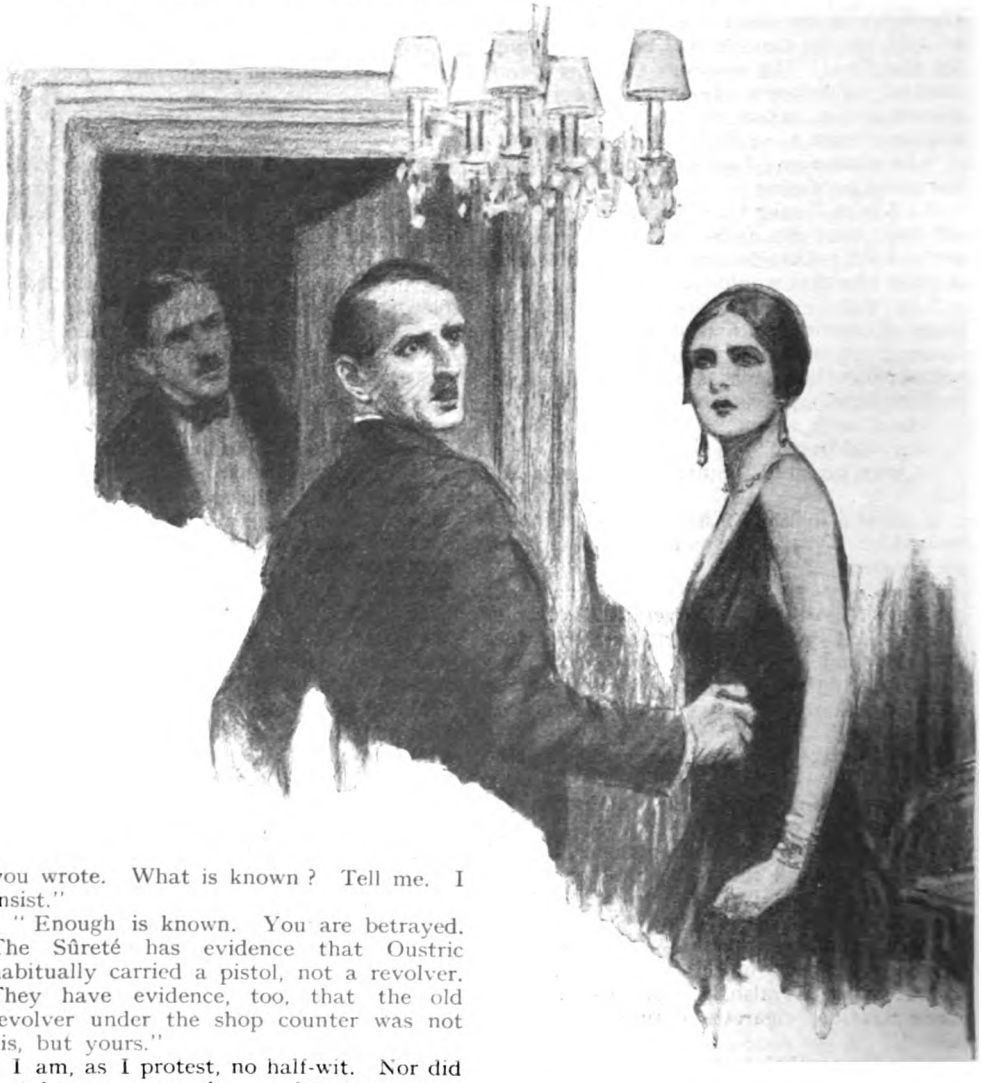
" Folly or not, I am here. All is known, you wrote. What is known ? Tell me. I insist."

" Enough is known. You are betrayed. The Sûreté has evidence that Oustric habitually carried a pistol, not a revolver. They have evidence, too, that the old revolver under the shop counter was not his, but yours."

I am, as I protest, no half-wit. Nor did it take me more than a few seconds to follow the line Kyra was adopting for her totally illegal experiment in the Third Degree. If the revolver was de Borneville's, and the woman admitted owning one pistol, and Oustric could be proved to have been in the habit of carrying another . . . Yet, even so, I was not prepared for de Borneville's gasp.

He gasped, after Kyra had spoken those two deadly sentences, exactly as I once heard a man gasp when the point of a bayonet took him in the vitals, " Ah ! Ah ! " with a gurgle in the throat. Imaginatively I saw him sway—and in a second Kyra drove at him again.

" They can prove Castelvetri was unarmed," she drove at him.



" Ah ! " Again the gurgle.

" And that the three of you had planned to murder him. They know the truth about Jacques's wound, and about *hers*, and about Castelvetri's dying deposition. They know everything, Monsieur de Borneville."

And with her man still gasping Kyra clicked on the light.

It was our friend's signal to go in; and he went in, his hand on the weapon in his jacket pocket, very quickly, yet not, as it seemed to me, watching the scene through the bathroom doorway, quite quickly enough.

De Borneville, as I had imagined him, was still swaying where he stood under the chandelier in the centre of the bedroom. His complexion might have been white cheese. Sweat soaked his forehead. The clipped hair on his upper lip twitched like a dog's ear. But his brown eyes were unwinking as they looked on Kyra—and it seemed to me—in fact, I was certain of it—that he must have recognized her, in the second the light went up, for the woman he had glanced at in the Press-box on his way to the bar.

He did not gasp again when our friend came in and past him. But the key, turning in the lock, sent a galvanic shiver through his slight body, and I, who have been through shell-shock, knew that he was suffering that peculiar torment which must have been inflicted in other days by the rack.

Our friend, his pistol drawn now, was standing at the locked door. I saw de Borneville's unwinking eyes turn over shoulder at him. Then they switched back to Kyra, who spoke slowly, emphasizing every word.

"There is no need to confess," said Kyra. "Unless you feel that a confession may save your mistress by proving that she

Our friend, his pistol drawn now, was standing at the locked door.

acted under your instigation. Everything is known. When Castelvetri came to the door of your villa, unarmed, you sent Jacques to open it. You had given Jacques his orders—to come back with his father. You knew, when you gave those orders, that the boy's father would not permit him to be present at your discussion. And you calculated that his father would keep the boy out of the veranda long enough for the three of you to do your murder, though possibly not on the struggle that ended in Castelvetri's flinging the boy from him, or the boy's head being struck as he fell.

" Yes. You calculated on being able to kill him before Jacques got back on to the veranda," repeated Kyra ; and I realized, from the pause she made, that she must be expecting an answer. But no answer came from de Borneville, and presently she went on.

" When Castelvetri entered the veranda," went on Kyra, while de Borneville's lips still twitched at her, " he did not see Oustric, or his wife either. He only saw you. You were standing where it had been planned that you should. You had calculated on telling him to approach. As he approached, it was your plan that his wife, who was behind him, should have fired one shot—wide and high. Then Oustric, hidden behind you, could have fired the second shot—to kill. After that, it would have been easy enough to place Oustric's pistol by the dead man's side, to plant the correct magazine in his pocket —and there would have been two of you to swear that a woman, always easy to defend before a French jury, had shot her husband in fear of her own life.

" That was your plan." Again Kyra had paused. Again de Borneville had made no answer. " But you had reckoned without your victim's anger. His struggle with his son had enraged him. He sprang straight at you, his fists clenched. He struck you. The bruise on your nose proves it. And as he struck, your mistress—fearful for your life—fired one shot.

" She fired," repeated Kyra, " and missed. But Oustric didn't dare to fire. Castelvetri had been too quick for him. Castelvetri had turned. He had caught his wife's wrist. As they struggled the pistol went off, muzzle downwards, wounding her thigh. Castelvetri tore the pistol away. When you saw him with it in his hand, your nerve cracked. You bolted. Oustric's nerve had cracked too. He fired in a panic, seven times. Castelvetri returned that fire—once, with the tenth cartridge, as he was shot down."

Kyra's voice stopped, on a silence such as follows machine-gun fire at night over No Man's Land when a raider is alone. And perhaps de Borneville re-lived such a moment, for as our friend moved, and the hand of the law rested on his shoulder, his mouth fell open and through thirty dreadful seconds it seemed to me that he must confess.

" It will be better for her if you admit everything," said our friend.

" I——," he began.

But on that, abruptly, another shiver galvanized the slight body ; the feet steadied ; the teeth snapped together ; the lips ceased their twitching, and I—who have been through shell-shock—knew that, for the moment at any rate, de Borneville was past his crisis, keyed up to that tension which makes a man's body more dangerous than magazine-pistols to handle, and his wits sharper than knives.

" *Du* bluff," he said to the Chief. " You know nothing. Release me, Monsieur." And to Kyra : " A pretty trap. A pretty theory."

Our friend, being a man, knew—as he told us later—from the very stiffening of de Borneville's shoulder-muscles that he and Kyra were already beaten. But Kyra, being a woman, for all her cleverness, didn't. Also, or so it seemed to me, she lost her temper a little. For, though our friend's hand released de Borneville, her attack went on.

" Theory ! " she shot at him. " It is the truth. You cannot deny it."

" I do deny it. You cannot get over the evidence."

" Whose evidence ? "

" Castelvetri's dying deposition."

" Begged of him by his wife, under cover of those reproaches heard by the witness Piquart—after his muttering, ' Camille, you have killed me,' had made even the fool Oustric, who planted the wrong magazine, realize that your story of *crime passionnelle* must be altered—before you, Monsieur de Borneville, had time to consult with your accomplices, to invent a fresh story——"

But de Borneville, still keyed, by his love for the woman perhaps, to that pitch of emotional tension when a man, for good or ill, can accomplish miracles, interrupted, grinning, " *Your* story is certainly the more ingenious, mademoiselle. It might even be the correct version. Yet the law is the law ; and I wager my neck that our twelve honest citizens will find mine the more credible one."

AND though Kyra still maintains, and our friend with her, that hers is the only possible answer to the question : " Who killed Castelvetri ? " those twelve honest citizens did !

Why Moths Fly to the Light

AN ENTIRELY NEW THEORY
THE WONDERS OF INSECT "WIRELESS"

By John J. Ward F.E.S.

Illustrated with Photographs by the Author.

THE moth and the candle-flame has always presented an insoluble natural history puzzle. Even in midwinter the glass of a street lamp on the outskirts of a town will often show several male winter-moths resting upon it; while an arc-light at midsummer will sometimes reveal a veritable shower of moth species, even including huge hawk-moths, whose whirling flight around the light is so rapid that their enlarged black shadows on the ground are often much more visible than the moths themselves. Occasionally there is a dull thud on the pavement when one of these heavy-bodied moths with frenzied energy has made impact with the lamp globe and been hurled to the ground. Why this excitement? What does it all mean? The solving of the problem is made the more difficult by the fact that many species of moths never visit lights at all; the phenomenon is confined to particular types.

Now, if one can propound a theory to account for why moths fly to a light, which at the same time explains why other moth species are not influenced by it, perhaps the greatest obstacle has been overcome. Such is the purpose of this article, and the explanation will, I trust, offer my readers some marvellous revelations of "wireless" wonders in the insect world.

To begin at the beginning, we have to turn from artificial lights and go on to the moors some sunny day in May, taking with us a reared specimen of the female Emperor moth, one newly-emerged from the pupa. The moth is placed in a covered box and set down amongst the heather. If a suitable area has been chosen, the chances are that almost immediately male Emperor moths will begin to assemble, coming at a great pace from all points of the compass, and continuing to come, thus indicating that they have travelled from long distances. The dodge is well known to entomological collectors; and there are many other moth species the males of which may be captured by this means of using the female as a lure.

There are a few points we have now to note carefully. The female Emperor moth when she emerges in the ordinary way from her cocoon amongst the heather, although provided with wings and well able to fly, prefers not to use her wings, and is content to rest amidst the herbage, where the males find her (Photo 1), just as they did our boxed specimen. What, then, is the subtle means of communication between the sexes? It should be observed that the male moths have branched antennæ (Photo 2), or feelers, and a microscopic examination of these organs at once reveals them as sensory instruments of great complexity. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to show that these feathery arms, clothed with hairs and bristles (Photos 3, 4, and 5), *are aerials that receive and tune in a wave, or emanation, transmitted from the antennæ of the female moth* (Photos 6, 7, and 8). These wave transmissions seem to be considerably interfered with by light rays: this is the new theory I propose.

Since the male moths travel up or down wind indifferently, it would appear that scent is not the attraction, and, as we shall see later, there are other factors which suggest that these insects have forestalled man in the use of wireless instruments

It so happens that this method of finding a mate has considerable advantages. Flight may be made in a wrong direction, and much time and energy thereby lost, but the "broadcasting" device spreads waves equally in all directions, and instead of finding only perhaps a solitary mate, it produces them in numbers—a selection. Hence the female Emperor moth is content to remain inactive so far as flight is concerned.

A system of attracting a mate that proved so effectual would naturally tend to evolve to a higher perfection, and so it comes about that we have a whole series of entirely different moth species adopting this method of which the Emperor moth represents but the preliminary stages. Since the organs of flight were not being used, the next stage of development was for the wings to lose their function, and later to become completely atrophied and gradually disappear in the female. In the case of the winter-moths previously referred to only the males are found around the lights, because the females possess only the merest fragments of wings, quite useless for flight.

Then come still other species whose females have so completely lost their wings that no trace of them is left. An interesting example is that of the Psyche moth, the larva of which feeds on the leaves of the birch tree, and covers its body with a case made of dried grass stems, or small twigs, much like that of a caddis-fly larva (Photo 9). In its rustic home it feeds in the perpendicular position, eventually changing to the pupa stage inside its case. Finally the matured moth emerges at the top of its rustic covering. The male is an active little fellow with good flying wings and feathery antennæ, but the female is nothing more nor less than a huge egg-bag (Photo 10). She is entirely without wings, and even her six tiny legs have lost their walking function. All she can do is to appear at the top of her case, remaining attached by her tail-end.

Fig. 1. Male Emperor moth (right) just arrived in response to a "wireless" call of the female.

As soon as she emerges, she gently rocks her body with a rhythmic action, and almost immediately male moths appear in great haste from all directions (Photos 11 and 12) in response to her broadcast message—just as in the case of the Emperor moth. One has barely alighted, with quivering feathery antennæ, before another arrives, and soon she has found a mate. Then an extraordinary thing happens to the disappointed males fluttering excitedly around; their excitement suddenly ceases and they begin to alight on the leaves and branches close by. Apparently they are loath to leave the spot; instead, they wait with their "aerials" poised, but show no excitement.

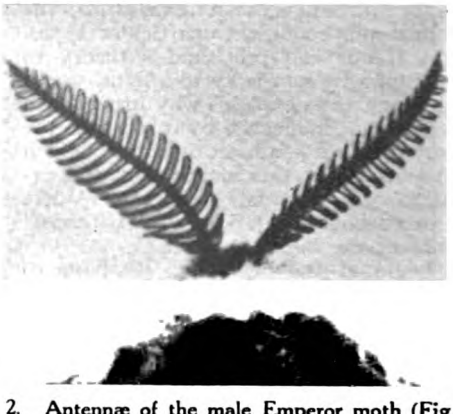


Fig. 2. Antennæ of the male Emperor moth (Fig. 1) enlarged to show their structure.

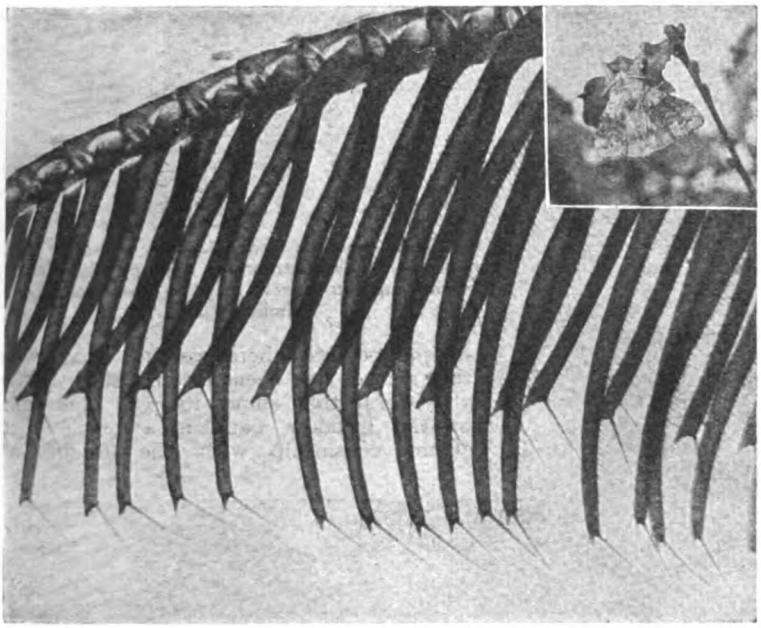


Fig. 3. Greatly enlarged antenna, or feeler, of male tussock moth (inset), showing the complex machinery which probably serves it for "wireless" communication.

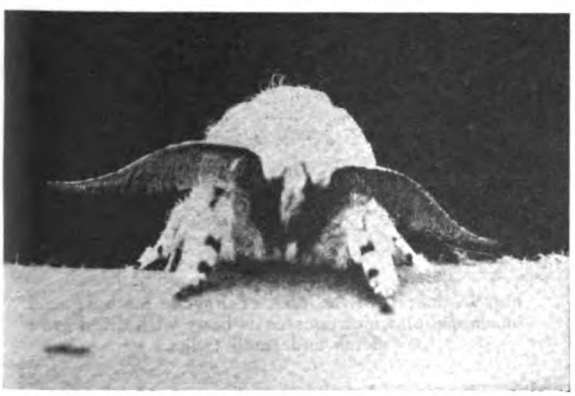


Fig. 4. Full face portrait of male puss moth "listening-in" to a call from a distant mate.

Surely the explanation of what has happened is that the lady in the case, when she found her mate, *shut off the wave*, and now the surplus males can no longer *tune in*; they are just waiting to pick up the wave again. Later on there is once more a sudden activity amongst the waiting males, their feelers are again excitedly vibrating, and their wings are fluttering. Soon they are once more in flight, but not towards the lady in the wooden case. They have gone in another direction, and they have all taken the *same course*—in response to the emanation of some other lady Psyche moth that is calling to them at a distant spot. It is not the sense of sight, nor is it smell such as we understand it, by which the males find their mates, for even when quite close they are completely lost to each other, unless *the wave is in action*.

All this may seem wide of the mark of moths and the light, but I must ask my readers' patience for just a little longer, when its full significance will become clear.

Probably these love messages of the moths are transmitted on exceedingly short wave-lengths, and it so happens that light is an electro-magnetic wave of that order. Just as you get a series of sound octaves on the keyboard of a piano, so on the spectrum of ethereal vibrations you get a much longer series, about sixty octaves, but only one of which is visible to the human eye as light. The visible rays run into the invisible radio waves, increasing in wave-length the lower the octave goes, and it is these lowest, or longest, waves that man uses for his broadcasting. Man cannot by means of his coarse wireless instruments tune in to receive these rapid vibrations of the ether by means of which insects communicate, probably because they are using those very short waves

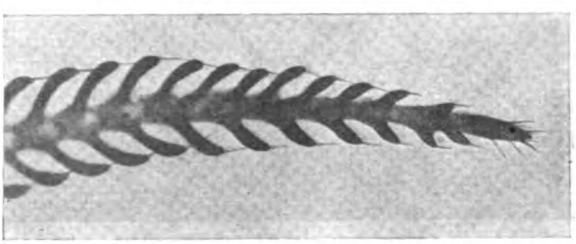


Fig. 5. Tip of antenna of tiger moth enlarged.

Fig. 8. Antenna of female moth magnified to show details of structure. It is possible that the cup-like objects may be some form of wireless valves.

Fig. 6. Female Emperor moth broadcasting for a mate. The antennæ (Fig. 8) are not feathery like the male's.

approaching visible light; waves measuring round about one fifty-thousandth of an inch in length, against those used by man in his wireless of hundreds of yards, or, in long-distance transmission, of several miles.

No moth has yet produced a visible light as a means of attracting its mate, but if we turn to an order of insects of much greater ancestry, that of the beetles, there we find that even this marvel has been accomplished. The glow-worm that shines its pale blue light on the meadow bank is a beetle that claims cousinship with the fire-flies of tropical America, and, like that of those insects, its light is of the most perfect kind, for it is all light, light without heat rays—the most economical form, for no energy is lost as heat. That is a point of the greatest interest, for in the wave spectrum the infra-red, or heat rays, come just below the visible light rays, and that may appear to present an obstacle to my suggestion that moths use those very short waves near to visible light for their communication. However, here in the case of the glow-worm and fire-flies we find insects which have entirely overcome the heat problem, and which have discovered waves

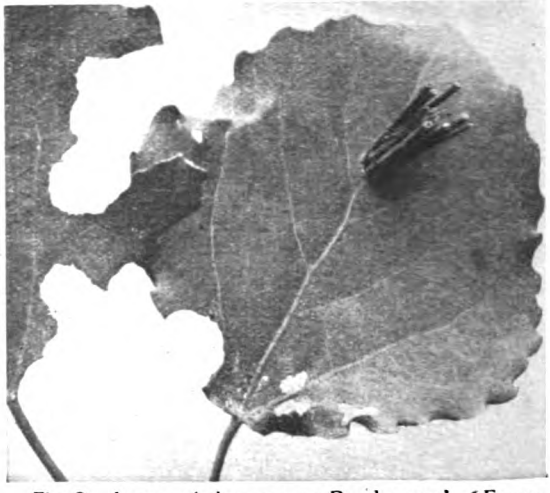


Fig. 9. Larva of the case or Psyche moth (*Fumea intermediella*), which encases its body with dried grass stems and small twigs.

Fig. 7 Antennæ of female Emperor moth magnified proportionately to those of the male (Fig. 2).

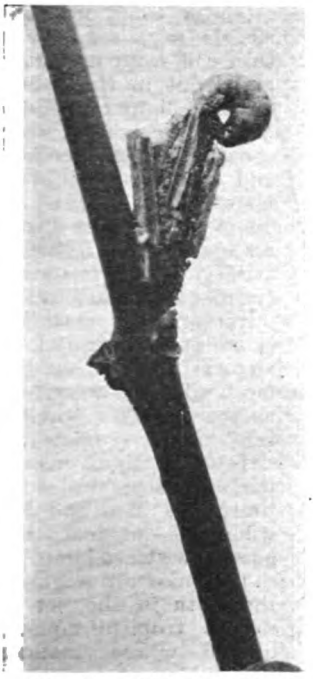


Fig. 10. Wingless Psyche moth on top of her case "broadcasting" for a mate.

Fig. 11. Male Psyche moth arrives in great haste with fluttering wings and feathery antennæ.

Fig. 12. He has scarcely reached her case before another male has arrived. Soon they come from all directions.

unknown to man, or some new properties, or vibrations, with which he is not yet acquainted. Here we have the perfection of Nature's tools when compared with those of man's design. There is, of course, a possibility that, in the case of moths, it may be these heat rays which they utilize; in which case the explanation of why they are attracted by lights (which are concentrations of heat) becomes obvious. Perhaps a subtle radiation of heat is passed from moth to moth through the ether, heat from its own excited body during the love season.

It is the female glow-worm that shines the brightest light; that of the male is scarcely noticeable. The light can be flashed on or off at the insect's will (just as the moth can its invisible wave), and the female beetles are called by country folk "fixed stars," and the males "wandering stars." Here again we have the inactive female; but the wonder of wonders is made when we discover that here also the female is wingless (Photos 13 and 14). Notwithstanding the fact that we are now dealing with a much older and entirely different order of insects, yet the same factors come into play, but this time with visible light rays. Probably there are other beetle species which may call their mates on the invisible waves, just as the moths do, for the sexes of beetles are frequently very different in appearance; but that is a point of natural history which has yet to be studied.

Many years ago, before our knowledge of wireless, Henri Fabre made a special study of the glow-worm, and, after calling attention to the fact that the female glow-worm's light is hidden beneath her body, he writes: "The anomaly is corrected in a very ingenious fashion, for every female has her little wiles of coquetry. At nightfall, every evening, my captives make for the tuft of thyme with which I have thoughtfully furnished the prison and climb to the top of the upper branches, those most in sight. Here, instead of keeping quiet, as they did at the foot of the bush just now, they indulge in violent exercises, twist the tip of their very flexible abdomen, turn it to one side, turn it to the other, jerk it in every direction. In this way the search-light cannot fail to gleam, at one moment or another, before the eyes of every male who goes a-wooing in the neighbourhood."

Having discovered that the female glow-worm is wingless, the next point that suggests itself is to inquire if the male glow-worm

has feathery antennæ; but here we find that the male beetle has the usual eleven-jointed feelers of any ordinary beetle. Now Fabre also points out that the male glow worm is possessed of "a peaked cap or eye-shade, the object of which appears to be to limit the field of vision and concentrate the view upon the luminous speck to be discerned." Feathery antennæ to tune in with are not needed by the male glow-worm, for he has visible light rays to deal with, for which eyes are wanted. But most significant of Fabre's observations for our present purpose was his comment that, "at the moment of pairing, the illumination becomes much fainter, is almost extinguished." Again we see that the wave is *shut off*—just as I observed in the case of the Psyche moth, previously described.

Fig. 13. Female glow-worm (*Lampyris noctiluca*), which is wingless and diffuses light from the last three segments of the body.

Now let us suppose that the communication waves used by some moth species very nearly approached the light waves, or visible rays, which the glow-worm has apparently adopted. A moth of that order is, let us say, responding to a call from a distant mate, but in the course of his flight he finds himself up against some considerable interference, and he is drawn out of his course sufficiently to discover himself suddenly up against an irresistible artificial light. The wave from that powerful "transmitting station" is so strong that it superimposes on the moth's desired wave, and as the moth's "wireless set" is not sufficiently selective to overcome the difficulty, the moth becomes lost and bewildered — against the glass of a street-lamp.

To make an analogy, the moth is like, let us say, a tropical aquatic animal whose instinct has guided it to water, and just at the moment that it reached the water that it was seeking, that water had frozen into ice. The ice would be new to its experience, but the instinct that impressed upon the creature that it was water could scarcely retract and persuade the animal otherwise. Surely this imagined analogy would be something like that of a moth which has suddenly overstepped the invisible wave near to light it had tuned in to, to discover the visible ray. If that is so, it explains why moths are held by the light, and also why other moth species that probably use longer wavelengths, well away from those of visible light, are not influenced by it. Perhaps, too, it offers an explanation of why nearly all moths are of nocturnal habits; for at night light interference is then at its minimum; and, after all, man's lights are entirely artificial to the nature of the moths. There are a few day-flying moths, of which the Emperor moth is a good example; but probably these day-fliers use those

Fig. 14. Male glow-worm, which can emit but little light, but is provided with wings and wing-cases.

wave-lengths still more distant from light-waves. It is interesting to remember that man obtains the best results with his wireless sets when darkness sets in, especially for long-distance transmission: even the engine of a motor-car is well known to generate more energy during darkness.

From the evidence I have here adduced, it would appear that the explanation of moths crowding excitedly around a light is that they have primarily arrived there on account of sexual instinct, but that their sensory wireless instruments have undergone interference because the wave-length of the light is approximately the same, but more powerful than that of the wave used naturally for transmission by the moths. Some of the moth species that visit the lights have no mouth parts, and in consequence are quite unable to feed. It is therefore essential that they should find their mates quickly, but when we realize that their messages in all probability travel at the same speed as light—a hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second—it is clear that it is an instantaneous call at the moment of broadcasting; which is another immense advantage of this method of finding a mate.

It is not, however, always male moths alone that are found at the lights. In the case of those light-visiting species whose females are tolerably good fliers, the presence of the females is easily accounted for, as, when in flight, they not infrequently meet with males already turned from their course by the attraction of some near artificial light, and probably such female moths are much puzzled by the behaviour of males so influenced, and arrive together with them at the light.

Mating does not appear to take place at the lights, the males are apparently too utterly confused; males of the larger species behave very recklessly in whirling flights, often with much damage to themselves by frequent collisions with the covering globe, or burns from a naked light; while in the case of a weak flier, like the winter-moth, he is held motionless to the glass, as if drawn by a magnet. There he remains until the light automatically extinguishes itself, when, in the twilight of the early morning, he readjusts his disorganized "wireless set," and when that readjustment is complete he probably wonders whatever could have happened on this extraordinary morning after the night before.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 176.

THE fate of Europe was decided here,
And eighteen-fifteen was the fateful year.

1. Noisy, indeed; but when we use a pair,
   We get, perchance, a gentle breath of air.
2. Here shields and spears of fire were seen at night
   Moving across the sky like men in fight.
3. This and the Holy Hill to distant men
   Were shadowed forth with pencil and with pen.
4. In time we find a river, and our word
   Has synonym that rhymes with coin and bird.
5. When met abroad, it possibly sounds queer,
   And, further, there is nothing like it here.
6. Three arrows from a friend the news conveyed
   To one whose hiding-place by this was made.
7. Who strikes the light would find it sound; 'twere meet,
   Perhaps, that one small word we should repeat.
8. A ring of fire, possessor of a bill,
   Whose neck is long and legs are longer still.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 176 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on March 12th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 175.

(The Third of the Series.)

WE bore him, town and isle, stupendous man:
How many greater since the world began?

1. Another mighty soldier, Goth by race.
2. In Latin heaven held the second place.
3. Element indispensable for breath.
4. Arboreal accompaniment of death.
5. Besieging this, great sailor lost an eye.
6. Equality of measure will imply.
7. Here, if you search the book of Revelation,
   You find, appropriately, the termination.

KING COLE.

1. A	lari	C
2. J	un	O
3. A	i	R
4. C	ypres	S
5. C	alv	I
6. I	sometri	C
7. O	meg	A

NOTES.—Proem. Napoleon. Light 5. Nelson.

Headlines

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
TREYER EVANS

THERE was a tear at the end of her nose. It was evidently a reluctant tear, because she was obviously one of those girls—of whom, God bless them, there are many—who have grit and courage and put up a dogged fight against overwhelming odds.

From the fact that it was ten minutes past nine and that she had just emerged from the vast entrails of that enormous hotel one would have won one's money if one had betted upon her being a manicurist. She was spruce, smart, and the bedside manner was hers. She could smile at the heavy badinage of clubmen whose spatulate hands she treated while their beards were removed by one man and their shoes were cleaned by another. She had the tact to make her clients believe that they were really rather doggy. It was a gift.

Then, too, as one noticed at once, her hands wore that immediately noticeable look of having been constantly in hot water, and her nails advertised her deft, delicate, and quite unnecessary art. It is difficult to understand why men don't look after their own nails. They did in the old days—unless, indeed, they didn't. History misses that point. It misses nearly all. But in the pictures by Raeburn, Romney, and even those of early Victorian masters—if there were any—men's hands looked as clean and well-cared-for as they do to-day. But why argue about that? Let us return to Sadie and the tear at the end of her nose—that most reluctant tear, of which she was deeply ashamed.

She was not hurrying away from the place of business in which she spent so many hours in perpetual electric light, and in neat and smiling attendance upon worthy and corpulent people, so that she might make for the tram that took her home to dinner and relaxation. She was dashing away from an emotional upheaval, the crisis of her life.

The young reporter to whom she was engaged to be married was on the verge of losing his job. He had been unable to achieve a scoop for considerably over a week. He had just said things that had gone right through her heart—to say nothing of her pride and her gorgeous faith in herself. Tactless, mistaken fellow. In reply to her offer to help him and to dig out of the day's strange doings something which his brother reporters had missed he had looked at her with an expression of ineffable and out-of-date sex antagonism and even scorn—the idiot. He had said: "*You*—help *me!* You—a girl, a woman! Don't make me laugh."

Without stopping to remind him of Joan of Arc, Florence Nightingale, Nurse Cavell, Jane Addams, Mme. Blavatsky, and the hundreds of thousands of little people who ooze out of the earth's belly every morning and after a hard day's work ooze back again at night, she had removed her dainty overall, tidied up her numerous implements, rammed upon her head the little pot which she called a hat, and, without touching her lips with the inevitable stick, had bolted to the stairs, emerged into the pseudo-Italian foyer, and was making for the swing doors which faced the library.

Numerous other people had come in and passed out during the last twenty minutes. They had taken no notice whatever of a tallish man who was standing in the way of the door ponderously, stamped with loneliness. Why should they? Apart from being tallish there was nothing about him to arrest the eye of man or woman—especially that of a woman. He was well past middle age. He had allowed himself, probably because he liked his food and sat about too much, to become distinctly flabby, not to say fat and soft. For that reason no tailor could do himself justice in the building of his clothes. His shoulders sloped, his waistcoat protruded, and his calves utterly ruined the nice line of trousers at which every tailor aims.

He was a sandy man, and, like all sandy men was freckled. His eyes were sandy and

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he indulged in sandy colours. He wore a walrus moustache, in which, as in his dry and obstreperous hair, there were many streaks of white. He had pop eyes, protruding teeth, and an underhanging jaw. There was, however, an undoubted indication of intellectuality in his very well-cut nose, while the bumps over his eyes proclaimed, and even shouted aloud, a photographic observation, an inexhaustible imagination, and a charming tenderness. The little mounds behind his ears—large, fungus-like ears—denoted love of music, and with this there went, of course, and rightly, a deep appreciation of feminine beauty and the comfort, refreshment, and inspiration which only beauty, and youthful beauty, provides so lavishly. The fact that he possessed humour was instantly to be recognized from the numerous lines of laughter which surrounded his eyes.

Undoubtedly he was the ugly duckling of his family. It must be said that not even his deeply loving and admiring mother, who was now so old that she read every line in the paper without remembering a word, poor darling, had been bound to confess—although never once aloud—that Hilary Panton had been born under an ugly star. To this she always added the comforting and sometimes true reflection that beauty is but skin deep, while with joy, with gratitude, and with self-glorification she remembered that her dear and successful Hilary, whose work as a novelist was known to all the world, was a good boy—oh, *such* a good boy, bless him!—notwithstanding the one or two little mistakes of which a very human love of feminine beauty is the inevitable cause. There were many more of these in the strenuous history of that distinguished man of which the dear little lady had never been aware. Discretion was the better part of valour with Hilary, and he held that it needed valour—especially when a man is well past middle age—to enter into fondly-remembered intrigues with feminine loveliness.

His two most friendly rivals had once summed him up in this often-quoted way. The patriarch who flung his work at posterity had called him an ordinary man. In reply to which the little Scotsman who listened to the fairies had said: "No, no, no, you're wrong. Extraordinary ordinary—that's the way in which I should describe our dear old Panton if I were to be asked."

And it was obvious that that was precisely how he struck the hurrying Sadie, even at that dreadful moment of humiliation and wounded pride.

Having given him one quick look, she drew up short and gasped. She stood on that Alma Tadema pavement with her back to a pillar which was a long way after Michelangelo. Her mouth was open—a pretty mouth with almost miraculous teeth. Her eyes grew wider and wider—charming, kind, astonishingly blue eyes, as blue as a robin's egg. Her expression was that of a hero worshipper face to face at last with an almost incredible god; of a hitherto untravelled person standing for the first time under the old magnificence of Westminster Abbey. It was very noticeable.

IT was, in fact, noticed immediately by Hilary Panton, with a very excusable thrill. Not only was he well past middle age, it will be remembered, but he was at that moment a very lonely man. Under such conditions almost anything may happen. Slightly excusable, too. He had already spotted this girl. He had already said to himself: "Very, very nice. A spring onion plucked freshly from the warm earth. How young! How gorgeously young! How unbelievably sweet! But why that tear at the end of her nose? Trouble, suffering, heartbreak? How very, very sad! Would that I could comfort her. To give comfort to the very young—I mean the very feminine young—is one of my numerous gifts. Would that these dreadful conventions which still hedge us in would permit me, standing in need as I do of human companionship, to take her hand, a dear little hand, so very, very clean, with such charming little nails, and say: 'Oh, my dear, my dear, who has had the temerity, the brutality, the tactlessness to hurt you so that there is a tear at the end of your nose?' Dash it, what harm would there be in that? My age—hang it—gives me almost the right to be fatherly, philosophical, comforting. If I am a judge of character—and even the most precocious, and therefore the most impertinent, of the younger critics grants me that I am—I size this child up as one who does not weep—as one who smiles and smiles and bears troubles with fortitude and pluck."

He had seen her at the moment when she had emerged hotly and under the stress of painful emotion from the persistent glare of her place of business—that large white place in which the movements of barbers and clients were reflected in a hundred mirrors, and in which the sounds of running water, murmurs of conversation, and the snippeting of scissors were overwhelmed by the endless whir of large electric fans.

He had slipped into Boston on important business. He had been forced to make a special trip from England in order to hold a conference with his publishers. He had arrived that morning in the city of which Massachusetts is so justly proud and,

because he was in terror of headlines, had sneaked in unannounced and had registered under the fictitious name—the first that had occurred—of Albert Henry Watts. He had chosen Albert because he was in the habit of looking at that wedding-cake memorial in Kensington Gardens from the workroom of his sandy-coloured house. And Watts because, with an ineradicable tendency to punning, he had said to himself, with insincere humility, "What's in a name?" well knowing that his own was worth at least two dollars a word. He had dropped in the Henry because he was very keen about rhythm.

He had been greatly distressed at having to leave New York unprotected and alone. He was a gregarious person and loved to stand with his back to a fireplace, empty or not, and talk of Life, Death, and the Great Hereafter, and practise upon an appreciative dog the ideas which he was about to shoot into an article. And who could be more appreciative than his good friend and agent who drew ten per cent. of all his earnings in return for appreciation—which, after all, is well worth ten per cent.? As Mark Twain said so truthfully and with such a deep touch of pathos: "I can live for a month on a single word of flattery." The agent in question—an extremely good fellow, upon the bricks of whose house H. P. was stamped in indelible letters—had fallen ill at the crucial moment. He had been rash enough to eat an unguaranteed lobster, and so had taken to bed with a nasty attack of ptomaine poisoning. It was very, very inconvenient—very, very annoying.

AND so he went across to Sadie, with courage in both his hands. But before he could utter one of his rhythmic phrases, and they came without effort because it was his habit to dictate, she met him half way with an ecstatic impulsive rush.

"Oh!" she said. "Oh! You! You, in person—here! How terribly wonderful!"

Panton was horribly disconcerted, though hugely pleased and flattered. An expression in which there was a curious conglomeration of fright and delight came into his sandy eyes. He said, holding out his hand, "How do you do? How are you? I felt that there was a bond of friendship between us, of sympathy. I am very lonely, and someone, surely a very cruel someone, has given you a wound. But I must ask you to tell me at once, frankly, why you greet me as though you'd ever seen me before. You haven't, you know you haven't. Why should you? I am only one of the indistinguishable pieces in the picture puzzle of life. I am merely Albert Watts. It is impossible that I should have a double. I am persuaded that Nature, ashamed of her handiwork, broke my mould at birth." He laughed at this piece of obvious badinage and rearranged his tie.

In her great excitement and joy, because every one of this man's perhaps too numerous books stood in a precious line upon a table at the side of her virginal bed, Sadie wiped away the tear. "Mr. Hilary Panton," she breathed, in an awestruck, enthusiastic whisper. "Oh, Mr. Hilary Panton, there is only one of you!"

The sandy celebrity, unique among the celebrities of the world because he was in mortal terror of headlines, recoiled from this very, very sweet little person as though he had been punched on the jaw. Good heavens, what was this? In one fell swoop his careful efforts to establish an *incognito*, so that he might not be swarmed upon by a bevy of eager reporters who inevitably would ask him what he thought about marriage, flappers' knees, the divorce question, the disestablishment of English and American Navies, and the position of the Sitwells in modern poetry, were now completely ruined.

Wiping several sudden beads of perspiration from his really distinguished brow, he held up a warning finger. "Sssh! Sssh!" he said. "My dear, my dear, you are labouring under a most astonishing misapprehension. I am not Hilary Panton, the greatest living author. I am not. I give you my word. I am, as I told you, Watts—plain Albert Henry Watts."

Sadie threw back her head, showed both lines of her miraculous teeth, and broke into a triumphant laugh. "You can't fool me," she said. "Why, you look down upon my bed from twenty-two gold frames, I have cut your photograph out of exactly that number of 'Literary' Supplements. I have you in a hat, in a cap, in plus-fours, in evening dress, as a country gentleman, as the skipper of a yacht. Oh, why go on? Ever since I have been old enough to read and to appreciate great literature, you have been my hero, my god of words." Her voice broke. Her emotion almost choked her. "Mr. Hilary Panton. Oh, Mr. H-Hilary P-Panton! If you were to begin at the top of every one of your pages I could quote the remainder of it to you without a single mistake." There was now another tear at the end of her nose. This time it was a tear of joy, of excitement, of relish, and, it must be said, of hope. Talk about a scoop!

Panton was deeply touched, although for reasons which have been stated he was equally embarrassed. Nevertheless, as he was well past middle age, this delightful but distressing *contretemps* opened up the most

"Oh!" she said. "Oh! You! You, in person—here! How terribly wonderful!"

pleasant and unexpected possibilities of quick familiarity. In his ghastly loneliness here was a gorgeous chance of being chummy with a charming and youthful feminine person whom he had described to himself, and rightly, as being very, very sweet. Grasping her little elbow with his sandy hand, he drew his constant and much valued reader into a more private place, and there beneath the leaves of a large palm not unpleasantly in sound of the orchestra in the dining-room, which, by a happy accident, was playing "Me and You on a high hill with love our only guide," he stood in front of her.

"I am discovered," he said. "You have torn the mask from my face. I confess that I am thrilled. I have had my triumphs—who, in various degrees, has not?—but the vast responsibility of gazing at you from all sides of your holy of holies places me on a pedestal of triumph that I never thought to mount. That I should know you so well and intimately, be so astonishingly in your secrets, takes my breath away."

He took her hand and raised it to his

lips. He was really vastly touched. Good Lord, why shouldn't he be? She was very, very sweet, and he was middle-aged.

"I must ask you, however, you darling, if I may say so, so soon—to respect my desire to avoid publicity. I swear to you that it is no affectation on my part to say that I tremble at the thought. I do not want to give my views on marriage, flappers' knees, the divorce question, the disestablishment of English and American Navies, and the position of the Sitwells in modern poetry—oh, those Sitwells!—to read things in the papers which I never said and never even thought, to find myself using words and expressions which are foreign to my mind, to have numerous breakfasts ruined by clippings in which the dire reiteration of errors follows me in and out of life. Let the fact that I am indeed Panton remain a secret, a dear and never-to-be-forgotten tie between us, now and for evermore. I'm sure you understand."

Once more he raised that much-watered little hand to his lips, confident that no one could observe him from his carefully-considered position behind that potted palm, and while his head was bent in deference and admiration and middle-aged hopefulness, he missed a most curious look of excitement, calculation, and cunning on Sadie's pretty face.

Out of the blue, following quickly on the heels of the moment when her pride had been so desperately hurt, the chance had been thrown in her way to prove altogether beyond argument that she, like so many other women in the past and in the present, was in no way inferior to the conceited male. Here, in a word, was the most glorious opportunity—if she were the tiniest bit unscrupulous, which, after all, is the prerogative of the female—not only to measure up with the man to whom she was engaged to be married, but even to save him from being kicked out of his position because of his inability to provide an immediate scoop. Hilary Panton in Boston—*incognito!* Hilary Panton, the writer of a long series of books which were as near to masterpieces as the modern and rather hurried pen could possibly achieve, hiding in Boston behind a pseudonym, and all for the reason that he had an unholy fear of those very headlines which provided a living for the young man who in reply to her offer of help had said, "*You*—help *me!* You—a girl, a woman! Don't make me laugh."

Good heavens! The gods were kind. Was it any wonder that, as she stood on the port side of that wonderful vessel, that Homeric person, she was seized with a temptation to perform a triumphant act, wipe out the humiliation of that tear at the end of her nose, and place her young man back in the high estimation of an editor to whom a daily "story" was necessarily the be-all and end-all of his inky life? Joan of Arc had listened to voices. Why shouldn't she answer to the call of love and pride? Why shouldn't she take advantage of the fact that she was young and pretty and that he was lonely and middle-aged? What were laws and ethics when balanced against an accidental and providential opportunity obviously sent to dry her tear and its cause, and place women once more on the high pedestal of efficiency upon which this foolish and mistaken lad had refused to allow that they stood?

But how? That was the question that teased her well-oiled brain.

PANTON said, the world looking rosier, "I suggest that you feed, my dear. I suggest that you give me the delight of watching you stoke your little engine after what has probably been a hard and trying day. Moreover, looking to the fact that it is rather late and that the vast dining-room will have assumed the appearance of a wilderness—and for other reasons"—he laughed with a touch of excitement—"I venture to suggest that I order you the most *recherché* little dinner in my private sitting-room, the number of which, if I remember rightly, is fourteen hundred and nine. Let it commence with caviare, end with a compote of fruit, and be enlivened with a bottle of pre-war champagne which is warmly ensconced in my socks. What do you say, you dear thing, you charming celandine?"

"Thanks most awfully," she said. "I can think of nothing so terribly wonderful. But what is caviare?"

He laughed with rare enjoyment. He was a simple soul. "Embryo fish," he answered, "with Russian antecedents, if you have optimism. With a pinch of lemon, a dash of finely-chopped raw onion, and sufficient daring to make one run the risk——" He put two sandy fingers to his lips and blew a kiss to the goddess of the culinary arts. He liked his food, that man, and revelled in occasional weaknesses, being exceptionally strong in between.

He offered his arm to Sadie's hand, pressed it warmly against his side in a spirit of protection, retraced his steps into the body of that magnificent hotel, and made for the place where a line of dials and a string of uniformed boys proclaimed the elevators. Sadie paid no attention to the grin which spread from one round face to another—Irish, Greek, and Italian, very clean and alert.

But just as she was about to enter the elevator she was seized with a flash of

inspiration. " Fourteen hundred and nine," she said. " I'll join you there in five minutes. There is something that I must do." She touched his arm with the tips of her fingers, flashed him one of her manicure smiles which had won her so many clients, turned, and disappeared. She was pretty certain that she would find her future husband still confiding his troubles to the manager of the hotel, into whose cheerful room he had

She touched his arm with the tips of her fingers and flashed him one of her manicure smiles.

gone after his ridiculous and untrue statement as to her inability to help. Yes; there he was, sitting behind a gasper in the middle of a tirade, a nice-looking lad with fair hair and a very honest face.

" Excuse me, Mr. Ouchy," she said, " may I speak to Jim ? "

Without waiting for the permission of the famous diplomat, who naturally was a Swiss, because in that country, far more than in any other, men seem to be born with the gift of managing hotels, she drew James Byrd aside.

" Jimmy," she said, in a pulsating whisper, " here's the top-notch scoop of your life. The greatest living novelist is staying in this hotel under another name. He's doing this funny thing because really and truly he's terribly afraid of being interviewed. It doesn't matter how—that I'll tell you later—but he's waiting for me up in his sitting-room to give me a very shick dinner, and somehow you've got to be there. I'm going to make him talk, which is easy—he never ceases to talk. I'm going to draw him out about all the other authors, tease him into giving his views on politics, religion, and every other question that he never would dare even to think about with a reporter in the room. Don't say you don't believe me, don't ask me how I know. Forget that you're the king of beasts, the glorious and noble male, and just accept the truth as I am telling it to you in a spirit of thankfulness. Get Mr. Ouchy to allow you to put on —I have it !—a waiter's clothes, so that you may serve the dinner and listen in. Quick, don't waste a second. This is the chance of your life."

She stood on tiptoes and kissed him, adding, " Fourteen hundred and nine." Whereupon, leaving behind her the most utter astonishment, she fled.

Meanwhile Hilary Panton had performed

an unusual feat. Having been a two-dollar-a-word man for a considerable time, he had been surrounded by a staff of people who got considerably in his way. In addition to an indefatigable secretary who took him down on a typewriter and listened with an amazing show of daily interest to his prejudices and inhibitions and his natural small conceits, he had a glossy young man who guarded him from the telephone, and a valet who wore his clothes. He also had a wife who, like the wives of all the novelists, was not interested in books. One way and another, therefore, he did nothing for himself. He was run and ordered and managed so that his whole attention should be devoted to the provision of an excellent living for his efficient parasites—under which heading, in moments of dire cynicism, he placed his spouse. But, being alone in Boston and decidedly middle-aged, he had not only ordered a mass of blooms from the florist down below, but had barged bullishly all over his sitting-room in an effort to tidy it up. He had pitched his pyjamas into his bedroom with his slippers and his toothbrush and a speckled dressing-gown. He had arranged a small collection of the latest novels of the younger men here and there—he wrote little screeds about them—and placed the works of all the Sitwells in a conspicuous place. Oddly enough, he rather liked the Sitwells and thought that they gave him tone. To a really successful novelist there is something about poetry that awakens a sort of respect. It earns such very small sums.

NOT quite unconsciously Hilary Panton had dramatized this event. An unknown girl, this, whose name he didn't know, of whose job he wasn't aware, but all about whom there was an incredulous intimacy and romance. He bore in mind the fact that his numerous eyes had followed her about the sanctum of her life. He described the whole thing to himself, with characteristic exuberance, as being "very, very delightful, indescribably sweet." And even if she had not been pretty and so obviously young he must have been touched and deeply grateful for such persistent loyalty. All his books, by Jove, and what a string there was! Novels, short stories, essays, discoveries, heartburnings, exposures, plays. With the keenest curiosity he wondered whether she had included in her collection his treatise on birds' eggs and wild flowers which he had written on the spur of the moment without the slightest knowledge of either. Oh, well, just genius, you know. Shakespeare *did* write Shakespeare, in spite of that ridiculous theory of unimaginative Baconians.

He thrilled at the tap on his door. This darling had discovered his identity and would never give him away. He felt like Haroun-al-Raschid in one of the Arabian Nights.

With the clumsy gallantry of the middle-aged Englishman who plays the infrequent *rôle* of *vieux mâcheur*, he handed Sadie a pink. He had never looked so sandy and unromantic—poor old thing.

He said, "Dear, imagine yourself in Arden. It is true that there are brown leaves upon the verdant sward, but if you listen you will hear the evening notes of birds, the last faint roar of insects, and the gathering approach of the nightly chorus of frogs. Through the leaves of this bower you may see, if you will, the golden shimmer of dying sun and hear the tintinnabulation of fairy bells and the high-pitched laughter of Amaryllis still clinging to the shade."

He laughed at all this tosh. He was a master of tosh when not dictating—and sometimes when he was. In off moments such as these he was very playful with young feminine people—a sandy bull in a china shop, blue and white china for choice. Blue eyes, white translucent skin—very, very sweet.

Sadie accepted the pink and, with a gesture of genius, thinking hard of Jim, touched it with her lips. "Oh, Mr. Hilary Panton," she said, "I can hardly believe it's true."

He chose to think that she was about to faint. Ecstasy sometimes takes the very young like that. At any rate, he sprang forward and caught her in his arms—that slight but sturdy frame capable of long-continued effort amid the whir of electric fans. He said: "My dear, my dear, you move me as I have never been moved before—with one or two exceptions." He was an honest man. "Such loyalty is refreshing, like water to a parched flower, or rather, let me say, plant." He kissed her on the cheek.

Through the most confounded force of habit he found himself writing this scene, composing it into a chapter while he stood outside himself. It was highly disconcerting. It made him feel like a bus-driver who, when he takes a holiday, rides a similar bus. It was only his reflection in the mirror, so portly, so sandy, so unalterably middle-aged, that switched him back from a novelist to a common or garden man.

Sadie assisted this transformation. With the inborn cunning of a woman, she slipped away like a fish. That disconcerting intuition with which Nature has endowed all women warned her to practise illusiveness at that early stage of the game. Hence the cheek, you see. Hence the confusion,

the maidenly blush, the dart behind the metaphorical tree of that imaginary Arden towards the protection of Amaryllis who still stood in the shade. Several years of manicuring had not been wasted on her. The clubman is a giddy fellow even when his chin is covered with lather, one hand dipped into hot water, and one shoe under the brush.

For a twenty minutes or so there was further amiable badinage on Hilary Panton's part, further indulgence in rather decent foolery, with little bits of Sitwell, scraps of the Elizabethan poets, and a touch or two of Smollett—but only a touch. It was very enjoyable, though a little sandy, perhaps. Every now and then the magic of his words, and the art with which he used them, and also the fact that the room was dimly lit, translated Panton out of sandiness, out of middle age. He became a veritable Paolo to this wise and practised Francesca, with a round, strong chin, a short upper lip, and the most marvellous set of teeth. Slight, too, of an exquisite concavity, athletic, sinewy, fine. Freckles leapt from his face like little things from trees, and obstreperous hair became curly, almost like astrakhan. Ah, me, it's often done when a man is lonely and undoubtedly middle-aged.

FINALLY, after a prosaic knock, the door opened. At the sight of Jim encased in the hard-hacked black of the average hotel waiter, just a shade too small, Sadie gave a gasp. With a stab of pain she saw him bring out a photograph and, with a sceptical expression, deliberately compare it with the dominating man. After which, with what seemed to be disappointment, he put it back in his pocket and commenced to lay the table, but not before he had darted a look at Sadie in which she read, " Now shoot."

It was then that she began to put Panton through a series of questions which he, blandly unconscious of the plot in which he was the *deus ex machina*, answered with a most astounding frankness and the most amusing turns of phrase. For the benefit of this eager and worshipping darling, who regarded all other living authors as the tail of his kite, he let himself go with complete abandon and with devastating words. He had been rescued from a long evening of lamentable loneliness and so felt happy and well, exhilarated and romantic. Then, too, being away from his usual haunts and unafraid of being accused of professional jealousy, against which, in such places as the Savile Club, he was most careful to guard himself, he revelled in diabolical fun, laughing all the time.

He went from H. G. Sells to Puxley, from Moresworthy to Mermaid Shore. Under the stimulation of his sweet companion's curiosity he drew the most mischievous character-sketches of his famous brothers in ink. He pulled out all their little weaknesses and laid them in a row. He burlesqued their style, their tricks of expression, and their favourite reiterations in a manner which would have given the utmost joy to the impish Max, who is a master of burlesque. He imitated their modes of speech, their voices and mannerisms. Ruth Draper herself could not have risen to such Parnassian heights of histrionic art. He dished up well-known anecdotes and told them with schoolboy relish and an almost feminine venom. He quite outdid himself. It was a *tour de force*. He soared completely out of prudence, rose high above the conventions of literary etiquette, performed the most amazing nose-dives among whole clouds of words, so that, eventually, there was not a rag left upon the bodies of those men.

He was so greatly helped in his brilliance by Sadie's constant chuckles that, every now and then, he forgot that she was pretty and that her eyes were robin eggs blue, and played up to what he recognized as a fresh and fertile mind. By Jove, these modern young girls were clever ! This girl, like many of her kind, had actually written for and edited a college magazine, and thus was astonishingly *au fait* with the various schools of writing of the present and the past.

He little knew that during all this the waiter was taking notes—the very efficient waiter who was always in the room. He little knew that behind the innocent blue pools of Sadie's eyes there was an Eve-like cunning, a growing sense of triumph, a gradual restoration of pride in her resourcefulness. Nor did he see, because she didn't let him, the frequent exchange of excitement from the waiter's eyes to hers, or was he even remotely aware of the final look of deference and admiration, congratulation and gratitude, which spread over his round face as he cleared the plates away. He only knew that in the enjoyment he was providing he was sharing fifty-fifty, and feeling very young. It was impossible for him not to be aware of the fact that if he had delivered all this to an Oxford audience or at one of the weekly gatherings of the Women Writers' Club in their cellar in Norfolk Street, his reputation as a witty fellow would have been hugely enhanced. But no one would ever catch him doing anything like that. It was, he felt, a real and genuine treat to have been able thus, and so safely, to have unburdened himself of all his prejudices and inhibitions without the slightest anxiety or the fear of giving pain. He hated

giving pain even more than he detested being interviewed.

One of the impromptus of which he was most proud was his description of H. G. Sells as "a professor of biology who refused to believe in the soul," and he jotted down for future use his summing up of Moresworthy as "a man who invented grievances and proved them not to exist."

He went over to the window at the moment when Jim was about to dash away. It was open. The night was very warm. Far down below processions of motor-cars were moving to right and left, their bright eyes gleaming. The roof line of the noble library was cut darkly against the sky. One of Chopin's Preludes was coming over the radio in the room next door.

Jim made a dart at Sadie. His face was flushed with excitement and the notebook in his pocket was filled with a story which would occupy at least a couple of columns and provide the sort of headlines which would make the editor utter whoops of joy. Gee, he'd got it this time! If he knew anything about it there were sentences in this scoop which would burn the cables up and cause a flutter in the literary dovecotes of the English-speaking world.

He flung his arm round Sadie's shoulders and held her very tight. "Forget everything I said to you," he whispered. "I was the darndest fool! The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Without a woman—without you——"

His voice broke. He stood in front of the capable girl who had done this deed all against the grain, not only for the resuscitation of her pride but as an act of love and loyalty, in a sheepish attitude of the utmost deference. "I've just got time to write this out," he added, as excitement caught him again. "WOW!"

WITH the closing of the door Hilary Panton turned, and when he looked into the face of the girl whose hero he was and for whom, in future, he would write his books as a special token of gratitude for her kindness in rescuing him from deplorable solitude, he thought that he had never seen so glorious an expression of young madonnahood.

He was startled, touched, and put upon his honour. Poor old thing, so sandy and middle-aged. After all, perhaps it was perfectly natural that he should take this to himself. Ships that pass in the night and throw out signals. One good turn deserves another, he thought, and was astonished to find that his desire to make love was suddenly replaced by a feeling of fatherliness. Um!—how strange, how sad! There must be something in this vague chatter about vibrations, then. All he wanted now to do, and did, was to descend from his mountainous ego and place himself at her feet. And so, somewhat clumsily, but with a very nice gallantry, he placed her in a chair and gave her a cigarette, sitting not too near, in his most conventional way.

For an hour, without a single interruption he listened with deep attention and sympathy to the story of her life, to all the intimate details of her hopes, ambitions, and work. And when, finally, she looked at the clock and sprang to her feet in a panic—usually she was in bed long before this hour because she had to be early to work—he led her to the door.

"My dear, my dear," he said, dictating once again—how strong are habits!—"I shall never be able to thank you. I have enjoyed myself. Whenever the word Boston flashes through my mind its letters will form a halo round your little head. I shall never see you again, but somehow I feel that when I draw the best there is in woman you will be my model. I am persuaded to believe—I cannot quite tell why—that I have done something to remove the tear from your nose. I can at any rate assure you with absolute truthfulness—and novelists must be truthful if they are to keep their sales up—that you have done me good. In all humbleness I must confess that it was not my original intention to be middle-aged up here. God bless you, dear little soul. All power to your scissors and your steaming bowl."

He raised her capable hand to his lips and bowed his head.

"Oh, Mr. Hilary Panton," she cried, with a little sob, "no wonder I read your books. You are as noble as your pen." She stood on tiptoe, and with a naive gesture of hero-worship kissed him on the cheek—that very sandy cheek.

Alone once more, but really not lonely because the voices of the angels echoed through the room, he paced up and down with his hands behind his back and a smile on his face.

"A great reward," he said aloud. "A recompense."

Then, quoting Pepys, whom he held in high esteem, he added, with a suggestion of a sigh, "And so to bed, old boy."

He woke at nine o'clock, having slept extremely well. He rang the bell for breakfast, and having given the order to the waiter, whom he had never seen before, he proceeded to get up. Essentially an artist, it never occurred to him to send for the valet when he had unpacked his clothes. They were a mass of creases, but he didn't seem to mind, and while the taps were running in his bath he raised his voice in song—a somewhat sandy voice.

He little knew that during all this the waiter was taking notes.

The sitting-room, filled with the flowers which he had arranged the night before, was fragrant with the memory of his fatherly adventure. On issuing from his bedroom in a bilious tie he found coffee and grape-fruit, porridge and toast, arranged upon the table at which his Sadie had sat. Sadie—she had told him her name and he liked it. It was so short and sweet.

There also were the morning papers, the front of one of which flung him into the air.

In enormous black letters the name of Hilary Panton, the famous British novelist, was followed by amazing disclosures; witty and trenchant criticisms; intimate accounts of the methods, style, mannerisms of Sells, Moresworthy, Puxley, and Mr. Mermaid Shore. Under these there were several columns surrounding the large reproducton of a photograph which Hilary Panton detested—it made him look so sandy and so dreadfully middle-aged. Here and there his remarks were emphasized by italics, and in a special box in different and noticeable print there were starred the two impromptus which he intended to remember: "Sells is a professor of biology who refuses to believe in the soul; Moresworthy is a man who invented grievances and proved them not to exist."

WHEN the waiter came in with the sugar which he had omitted to put on the tray he found number fourteen hundred and nine in a state of utter collapse. He was, in fact, lying flat on the floor with both hands over his face. Great sobs shook his shoulders and tears streamed on to his tie.

"*Sancta Maria*, what can I do to 'elp?"

"Nothing—n-nothing except to go away! Leave me to my shame and disappointment. I tell you that my faith in women has been rudely undermined."

He scrambled to his feet, gave a snatch at the table napkin, and commenced to dab his face. "Go away. Leave me. Such is my humiliation that it must not be seen by mortal eye." He waved his hand to the door.

But before the waiter could leave the room Sadie and Jim oozed in. Both were a little frightened and nervous and, if the truth must be told, ashamed.

At the sight of her hero's tears and well aware of the reason—she had bought twelve copies of the paper to hand down to her heirs—Sadie made a rush. She seized the hand of this Homeric man, crept to his port side, and hid her face in his coat.

"Oh, Mr. Hilary Panton," she said, "what have I done to you?" And before he could break away or denounce her rhythmically she told her little story in the simplest possible way. Jim—and what he had said to her when she had offered him her help; the sword of Damocles that was hanging over his head; their love; their dream of a little house; of children; her accidental recognition; the temptation, too strong to resist; the epoch-making scoop.

And while she recited all this with contrition, with emotion, with the flame of love in her eyes, there stood the sheepish Jim near the door glowing with pride at his editor's praise and expecting to be made a football of by a large and angry boot.

What was Panton to do—this sandy man with the kind heart and the love of humanity? After a pause he said, with a tear on the end of his nose, "Oh, my dear, my dear, how could you have done such a thing? If only you had confided in me. I could then have given this boy of yours such very different things. As it is, I shall have to be a hermit for a very considerable time. Nevertheless I recognize, with a sneaking admiration, what this means to him, and because of him to you, and so I forgive you both, and if you will let me know the date of your marriage I will send you b-blooms."

He turned and looked at Jim, who came a step forward, fumbling with his hat. "Ah," he said, "you made a very good waiter. I hope and trust that through the whole of your life you will serve this dear, sweet soul with similar excellence. Forgive me for a moment."

And under the eyes of her future husband—he had humour, this man—he put his hand under Sadie's chin, raised her tear-stained, charming face, and kissed her on the lips.

NEXT MONTH:

A new "CHALLENGER" Story:

"When the World Screamed,"

By **A. CONAN DOYLE**

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

CASES FROM MY CRIME-BOOK

THE "EYE OF THE POLICE."
Badge of Parisian Detectives

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

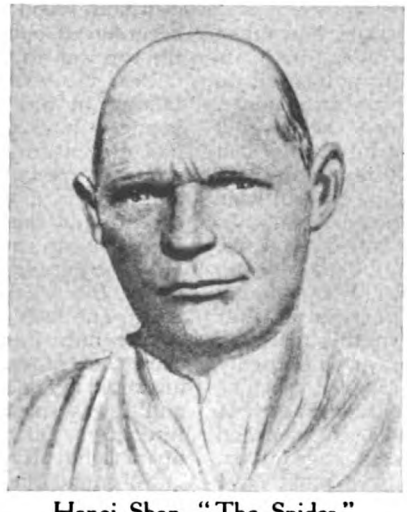
AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. XII. CHANG FOO LEE:

A Tale of Hanoi Shan, "The Spider."

READERS of this series of true crime-stories will remember the cunning Oriental, Hanoi Shan, who was the villain of the strange case called "The Suicide Room" (the second of the series), and whose cunning methods earned for him the nickname in Paris of "The Spider." Once the governor of a province in Tonkin, China, he was crushed and mangled by a mad elephant—so badly that the surgeons despaired of his life. But he recovered, warped not only in body but in mind. He developed into a bestial criminal, with a ruthless disregard for human life, eventually becoming the leader of a vast criminal organization responsible for a sudden epidemic of strange, inexplicable deaths which occurred both in London and in Paris in the years 1906 and 1907. Were there many such monsters as Hanoi Shan loose in the world, the task of those who represent law and order would become well-nigh impossible. Shan with his Oriental cunning, and oblique, devious ways, rendered more formidable because of his cruelty and strange unexpected tricks, had knowledge and originality. One might almost call it a gift for evil. Whilst he was at large we always awaited the unforeseen. Why his men never betrayed him had puzzled us, but the case I am about to relate brought understanding.



Hanoi Shan, "The Spider."

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A MYSTERIOUS BURGLARY.

MY friend Bannister, the famous American detective, had made it a habit to come to the Sûreté laboratories at odd times, at least twice every week. M. Bertillon's genius for devising new appliances and systems, with which to arm the French detective organization, interested the American greatly. I was not surprised, therefore, when he entered my office one bleak morning, threw his hat on the table, and sank into a chair near the fire.

"Anything new?" he queried. Then, without giving me time for reply, he added: "I am here to see Dufresne. He wants some information about a fellow named Manuel Valiente, a Spaniard or South American, who lives in the rue Malvoisier—— What is the matter?"

I had jumped up at the mention of the street.

"Why, that's probably where the burglary was committed last night," I exclaimed. "I don't know the details, but I am going there with my assistant."

"H'm! Well, you might let me know if it turns out to be interesting. I shall wait for your chief; he is not in the office yet. I have, unfortunately, only to report that New York knows nothing about the man."

"I believe M. Dufresne is at the rue Malvoisier now," I said; "I'll tell him you are waiting."

"Why, no! If that is so, I'll come along. You have a car, I guess?"

The rue Malvoisier is one of those old-fashioned thoroughfares where large, well-built houses appear to be squeezed between dingy shops, and narrow alleys where *cafés* and wine-shops abound.

The flat in which the burglary had taken place was on the fourth floor, with its windows towards the street; a long single balcony running the full width of the house. Rousseau had lately attained the coveted rank of chief inspector, but his habits had not changed. As we passed through the main entrance, we saw him sipping a glass of wine and chatting with the concierge.

"Wait a moment," he called after us. Then, when we returned: "Colbert is up there and the chief also. It's a funny business. The janitor's wife tells me that Valiente came rushing down this morning, shortly after ten, waving his arms excitedly and jabbering some foreign tongue. When he cooled down sufficiently to talk French it turned out that his safe had been wrenched open. You'll see that safe. A huge affair. The noise when the door gave must have been terrific. Yet the fellow maintains that he heard nothing. Nor did he wish to send for us; but the concierge here had instructions to keep an eye on Valiente, and at once called in two inspectors, who have been keeping the house under observation."

"What made you suspicious of the man?" I asked.

"Many things; his appearance—he is much too dark-skinned even for an Andalusian, unless he is a gipsy. Then, although he appears to be rich and his wife is young, handsome, and elegant, they are followed wherever they go by two villainous men of the Nervi type——"

"Nervi!" I exclaimed. "You mean *apaches* from Marseilles?"

"Yes. At first we believed that they intended harm to Valiente, but one day he was observed talking to them; and when the concierge complained of their presence in the house, Valiente let slip that they were his servants and bodyguard, because his life was threatened by a Chinaman. Furthermore, he was overheard saying something to them which sounded like 'Watch for Chang Foo Lee.'"

I started back amazed. "Why, that's one of Hanoi Shan's most dangerous accomplices. He slipped through our fingers the last time."

"Precisely. So it looks as though this Manuel Valiente is a former member of the gang who has fled from them. I'll come up with you now; the chief needs you in order to question the man, for he speaks only broken French."

HOPES OF BIGGER QUARRY.

I FOUND M. Dufresne pacing up and down a large front room in a corner of which stood the safe. The door had been forced open by means of levers, and the top was partially ripped away.

Near the window stood Manuel Valiente, talking in an undertone to a handsome young woman, evidently the wife Rousseau had described. Valiente was indeed a strange type. He was tall and muscular, and his grey, well-cut lounge suit merely accentuated the swarthy colour of his skin. He was clean shaven, with thick, fleshy lips. His blue eyes looked startlingly out of place under the black brows and crisp curling hair. The face was undoubtedly that of an Arab; but, then, many Andalusians still show their Moorish origin plainly. Valiente answered my questions with great reluctance, and I was surprised at the harsh, guttural intonations of his speech, but he spoke Spanish fluently.

No sound had come to him during the night, he averred, although his bedroom

communicated with the room where the safe stood.

'Has anything been taken from the safe?" Dufresne snapped.

The man shook his head, then explained, hesitatingly, that only worthless papers had been kept there. After some further questions Dufresne drew Bannister and myself into the passage, where Rousseau joined us.

"Well?" my chief asked, looking at the American, "anything from New York?"

"Nothing—but then your description was vague. I'll cable again. Try to get his photograph or finger-prints."

Dufresne shrugged his shoulders.

"That will not be easy—you see how unwilling he is to help us in any way. What do you think of the couple?"

"Spanish Jews or gipsies," my friend replied. "I begin to understand why you are taking all this trouble."

"Rousseau has told you, eh? Yes, there is something very queer about the whole business. I don't believe the fellow was in the flat last night. An entry was made from the stairs, through the balcony window. The men who did it must have known that the inmates were away. A pane has simply been smashed and the pieces left lying on the floor inside. We have two finger-marks on one fragment."

"Who lives in the adjoining flat?" I asked.

"An old lady," Rousseau growled. "Stone deaf—came here after the Spaniard moved in. Upstairs there are only single rooms; the one above this belongs to a young Chinese student; the others are empty."

"A Chinaman?" Bannister exclaimed in surprise.

"Oh, yes; but that in itself is nothing strange—there are many such studying at the University."

At that moment Colbert, who had been busy with my assistant, came out and reported:—

"I've finished, chief. Two broad levers were used on the safe. Entry from the window. A skilled gang did the work—hardly any traces. They knew the place was empty and that the old lady next door is deaf, for they worked without troubling about noise."

"Come along, then," Dufresne replied. "We'll try Valiente once more. Ask him bluntly where he was last night."

To my surprise, when I put the question the man became very pale, but finally admitted after much hesitation that he and his wife had motored to Dieppe two days before, and only returned that morning. M. Dufresne made a note of the name of the hotel where the Spaniard stated that they had spent the night. With this meagre result we had to be content.

A TRAP FOR HANOI SHAN.

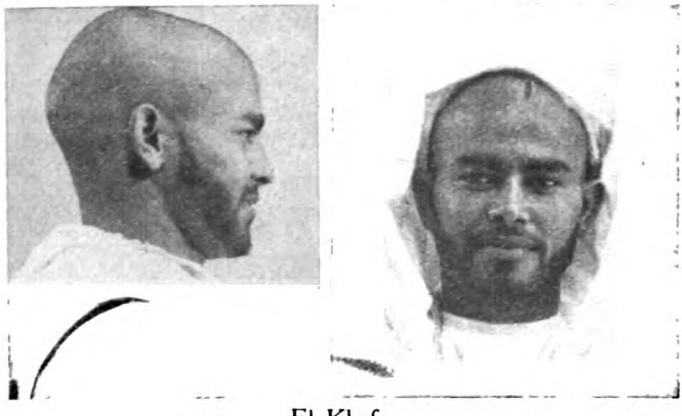
THAT afternoon, whilst we were busy at the laboratory, Bannister came in with a cable from New York. The police in Buenos Ayres had forwarded the startling information that a man answering to Manuel Valiente's description was in reality a Tunisian named El Khefir. He had disappeared suddenly a year before, together with his wife Loletta, who was also an Arab. The couple were suspected of being members of Hanoi Shan's organization, and evidence had been found which proved that "the Spider" had been hidden in their house during the weeks we were searching for him after the murder of Van Bromen. No trace of El Khefir had been discovered until now.

When we carried this news to Dufresne he at once consulted with M. Bertillon, and it was decided that the Tunisian should not be arrested immediately, in the hope that we should finally trap the diabolical Shan. Detectives were posted around the house in the rue Malvoisier in such a fashion that every approach was under observation.

The young Chinese who posed as a student.

"You and your American friend are the only ones who have ever seen 'the Spider,'" M. Bertillon said to me, "so you'd better watch the house also. Don't risk losing him this time. He is probably lurking somewhere in the neighbourhood. We know that he can only stir out at night, so keep in constant touch with your colleagues. Several cars shall be posted in readiness. Of course, 'the Spider' will

remain in hiding as usual, whilst his agents carry out the work, whatever it is. So see that they lead you to him. I imagine that this El Khefir has quarrelled with Shan, and perhaps has something valuable in his possession which 'the Spider' is trying to obtain. That explains the bodyguard. If he tries to flee we shall have to follow closely, for Shan's men will certainly not let him escape; and sooner or later Shan himself will make a move. Rousseau shall take possession of



El Khefir,
in his native dress when he first arrived in Marseilles.

one of the empty rooms under the roof. The concierge must be warned and given a weapon. This is going to be a fight to a finish. I have discovered that the Tunisian did not go to Dieppe, and Rousseau says that the concierge in the rue Malvoisier neither saw him go out nor return. It is quite possible that he passed over the roof into another house and spent the night hunting for Shan. Let a closed car conduct El Khefir, *alias* Valiente, to the Quai des Orfèvres after dark. I wish to question him. If he is terrified of 'the Spider' he may betray him to us, in return for police protection. We know how dangerous Shan and his men can be. Your colleagues must be numerous and ready for any emergency."

When we reached the rue Malvoisier we perceived that the Sûreté had already given instructions to the local police-station, besides sending all their available inspectors, and several of our taxis and a lorry were stationed outside various *cafés*. A whistle would bring a dozen detectives to our aid immediately. Both Bannister and I had dressed as workmen, and were thus able to sit in a little wine-shop opposite the house without exciting any remark. Soon after dusk two men entered one of the waiting cars and drove away quickly, but as they passed I caught a glimpse of the Tunisian's face.

THE INEXPLICABLE MURDER.

HOURS dragged by in absolute inactivity. There were only the usual people belonging to the district to be seen, and we had just crossed to chat a moment with the concierge, when El Khefir entered the house with the detective who had conducted him to headquarters. A minute later a wild yell above our heads startled us, and we raced upstairs. The door of the flat was wide open, and in the same room which we had visited that morning we saw Rousseau on his knees beside the writhing, twisting form of the woman Loletta, whilst the husband stood wringing his hands and wailing like a child, his eyes rolling from side to side as though he were demented. A detective at once closed and guarded the door, whilst a colleague hurried downstairs to prevent anyone from entering or leaving the house.

Rousseau was vainly trying to force brandy between the woman's clenched teeth. Even as we stooped to help, the convulsions ceased, the whole body relaxed, and the head dropped against Rousseau's arm. Loletta was dead. A rapid examination failed to show any traces of a mortal wound, but running in a double line from the neck to one shoulder were a number of tiny punctures around which the flesh was swollen and blue.

"This is devil's work," Bannister said, hoarsely. "I've never seen anything like it. What killed the woman?"

"Devil's work, yes," came in a wail from the Arab, who had dropped to his wife's side and was holding her tightly pressed to him, tears streaming down his face. "Oh, my Loletta, my Loletta! I should never have brought you here."

His voice rose to a snarling, inhuman yell, and, releasing the dead woman, he drew a pistol and began running round the room, striking at the walls and overturning the table and chairs. Suddenly he halted before the window and pointed at the curtains, which were moving slightly. Rousseau sprang forward and pulled them aside with an abrupt gesture. But the space behind them was empty. The movement had been caused by the wind blowing through the broken pane, and we saw that the iron bar which the police had padlocked across the hole, from wall to

wall, was intact. Not even a child could have entered.

M. Bertillon now arrived with Dufresne and the medical expert, and whilst they examined the body we made a minute inspection of the premises, even sounding the walls and testing the floors for hidden trap-doors. We had barely finished our work when M. Bertillon called to us.

"We must make a rapid investigation at once," he said. "Rousseau, will you please take two men and search the other flat? The walls come together at this room. Arrest anyone you find there except the old lady. Sound the walls, and see if there are any sliding panels. You know Shan's methods. What about upstairs?"

"No one there, monsieur. The only room I've not entered is the student's, for he is away."

"Very well—I'll see about that later."

M. Bertillon turned to the doctor, who was peering at the punctures in a puzzled manner, and asked: "Have you any idea what killed the poor girl?"

"No, monsieur. I've never in all my life seen such strange marks—I can say nothing without analysis and special tests, and even then——"

"All right. You'd better attend to the husband, who appears to be ill. I'll make my search before she is moved."

Loletta,
wife of El Khefir, in native dress.

THE TREACLY FINGER-MARKS.

I COULD see that even my chief was puzzled. Back and forth, from window to door, he went carefully over the ground, examining everything with a powerful lamp and his special lenses. Suddenly he stopped beside the dead girl and, bending down, picked a hair from her white gown. This he placed in an envelope, then he removed one of the girl's hairs for comparison.

"I have found nothing except strange sticky marks, along the floor and on the walls, which look like treacle," he said to me; "they are finger-marks, I imagine, but useless to us because of the glutinous substance on them. Another strange thing is that each one has a sharp line some four inches in front of it. To-morrow we must measure and photograph them. Go now and see if Rousseau has discovered anything. An inspector shall stay here to-night to protect El Khefir. He admitted his identity, but swears he never heard of Shan. We'll remove this poor girl later, when the streets are deserted."

I found Rousseau at the door.

"Nothing," he said, in answer to M. Bertillon's query. "There was only the old lady in the place, and she was asleep. The concierge had to rouse her; fortunately he possesses a key to these flats. The wall has a mirror in the centre, identical with the one in this room, but it is screwed to the woodwork and a fixture. So is this one. I've tried it. No hollow sound anywhere. But there are a ladder and a trapdoor leading to the roof, at the end of the corridor above us."

"Ah!" said M. Bertillon. "Of course—there would be. I'll just examine the lock on the outer door, and then we will have a look at that ladder."

THE FINGER-NAIL CLUE.

WE found one more sticky finger-mark near the handle, but no signs that the lock had been forced. The heavy wooden flap leading to the roof was bolted on the inside. When he gained the top of the ladder M. Bertillon stooped eagerly and picked up a thing which looked like a slender slip of horn. He held this out to us with a smile.

"That's one of the nails which left those straight lines in the room."

"A nail!" I exclaimed.

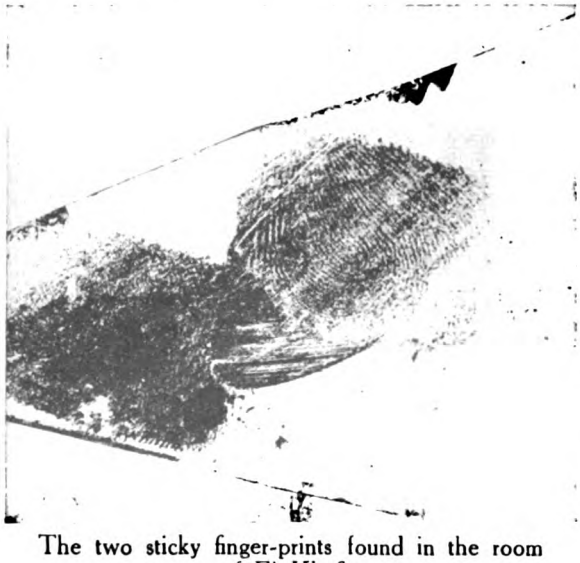
"Yes, a Chinese finger-nail, two inches long; perhaps it is Chang Foo Lee's. He was once a mandarin and would continue to wear his nails long. Well, we know at least that 'the Spider' caused the death of that woman, and I begin to have an inkling of the reason. You'll see El Khefir will try to escape the moment he is left alone. He has hidden something 'the Spider' wants. The safe was first broken into because of it; that was a mistake—for it gave us an opportunity to investigate. Perhaps Shan knew that the house was watched and had to act quickly. The woman was killed in order to terrorize the husband and drive him to flight, with the desired object on his person. What would happen then we can guess. He must have contrived some secret hiding-place in the flat which Shan cannot find. Be sure he has tried. I'll wager, too, since El Khefir is an Arab, that he will attempt to avenge his wife."

"How did she die?" Bannister asked.

"I think I know—but it is too horrible to talk about. Wait until we are sure. You, Rousseau, stay here and watch. But be sure also that the Oriental will know you are here. Mr. Bannister will perhaps continue to help us? I am going to the laboratory to examine these hairs and to assist the doctor when the poor woman is brought there later. You must make it your especial duty to follow the Chinese student. Take it in turns, but don't lose sight of him. You shall in turn be followed at a distance by colleagues. The two Nervi have disappeared, but the Arab probably knows where they are. I believe he is trying to turn the tables on Shan."

The night passed without further incident, nor did we see the Chinaman. During the day Bannister and I each snatched a few hours sleep, and the afternoon found us ready and alert. The inspector had meanwhile been withdrawn from the flat, but detectives were hidden all around the house.

We counted on trapping Shan and his men in the building; a chase across the housetops would give him too many chances for escape.



The two sticky finger-prints found in the room of El Khefir

WE TRAIL A CHINESE.

IT was already late in the evening when we espied a young and good-looking Chinese leave the house in a care-free manner. His face was bland and childlike, and no one would have believed him to be anything else than just one of the many Oriental students residing near the University. He walked slowly to an omnibus and alighted at the St. Lazare station. "The river, of course," Bannister muttered; "that's Shan—this time we must warn the river police in time."

"They have been warned," I replied. "The Seine is patrolled everywhere."

Behind us, as we entered the crowded compartment of a Versailles train in which the Chinaman was already seated, I saw a dozen of our colleagues, in workmen's overalls, clamber up to the overhead seats of the old-fashioned carriages. It was a good move—for they could thus watch the whole train. Our quarry got out at the little suburb of Courbevoie. We were quite near when he passed the barrier, and with a thrill I perceived two dark, ruffianly-looking men, who had been lounging carelessly beside the ticket collector, suddenly close in behind him.

"The two Nervi," I said to my friend. "Bertillon was right. They know all about the student and will try to kill Shan. Look at their bulging pockets."

Bannister nodded and pressed my arm, adjuring me to remain silent. The Chinaman ambled through the main street, stopping now and again suddenly to look behind him. The Nervi had crossed the street and the detectives were some distance

away, lost apparently in a noisy drunken argument. Abruptly—just as we caught a fugitive gleam from the river through the trees—a car which had been standing dark and motionless before a factory suddenly began to glide away. With a bound the man we had followed sprang to the dashboard, and before we could decide what to do disappeared in the distance. But the Nervi had been quicker to act and were already racing along the river bank. We at once did the same, keeping in the shadows. Not two hundred yards distant stood a little house in a garden. Just in time I saw a dark shape vault over the gate and vanish, whilst the car continued straight along the road. We stopped instantly. The crisis had come and help would be needed.

The two ruffians had evidently circled around the low wall, for they were no longer to be seen.

"I'll run back and get our men to spread out," my friend said, "so that no one can get away from that place, and I'll also send one of them to fetch a police boat. We simply dare not fail this time. Wait here; don't attempt anything until I return."

Fortunately Bannister was soon back, puffing and breathless.

"All right," he panted, pulling out a large automatic. "Now let's go and get Shan. I've warned the others to be ready, but not to come unless they hear a pistol shot."

The hand of Chang Foo Lee, showing the broken nail of the index finger.

We had just climbed over the wall and were advancing cautiously across the weed-filled path when a low, dreadful moan of agony caused us to halt, our flesh creeping. A faint light shone from an open door, and it was from there the sound had come.

"That's a trick," Bannister whispered, "unless the Nervi have already got Shan. Either way, let's go slow. That light is dangerous, for it'll make us visible so soon as we approach the house."

Stealthily we crept nearer on our rope-soled shoes, making no sound. Again a moan, much fainter this time, brought us up, listening intently, our eyes searching the house and garden for the least movement. With an effort we overcame our hesitation and gained the entrance. Before us was a long narrow passage, dimly illuminated, along which we tip-toed until we reached the inner room, from which shone the light we had seen. Pistol in hand we entered, to stop instantly, spell-bound at the weird, unexpected sight which met our gaze.

Sprawling on the floor, a knife in his heart, was one of the two men come to kill Shan; the other was sitting in a chair, his arms flung across a table beside him, and from his back also protruded the handle of a dagger.

THE GHOSTLY SHAN.

BOTH were probably dead, for no sound or movement came from them. The eerie silence and the otherwise empty room gripped our nerves with superstitious terror, and the sight of our white faces reflected in a large mirror over the mantel nearly caused me to cry out in alarm.

"Cut off the light," Bannister whispered sibilantly. "I have a feeling we are being watched; the switch is just by your shoulder. Quick, but keep your hand on it."

On the instant darkness came, Bannister yelled:—

"My God! Look! Shan!"

Straight before us, floating in a blue haze, we saw the shining evil eyes and bestial insect face of "the Spider"; then two roaring detonations from Bannister's pistol, followed by a crashing and splintering of glass and a hoarse bellow of rage, caused me to lose my head.

"The light! The light!" my friend cried; but before I could fumble with the switch powerful hands grasped my arms, whilst

blows rained on my head and shoulders. My feet were pulled from under me and I came to the ground with a crash.

"I'm down." I cried, desperately. "Shoot, Jim!"

Bannister realized what I meant at once: I was safe from a chance bullet, and his pistol again began to flash redly. Cries and groans replied, and the fellow who held my feet suddenly let go. Our colleagues arrived just in time, and with their help we were soon masters of the place.

THE TRICK MIRROR.

BANNISTER at once ran to the wall where we had seen Shan. A gaping rent in the centre of the mirror showed where his shots had taken effect. Behind this hole was another room, dimly lit, where several police were busy subduing and handcuffing some Chinese. I noticed the young student amongst them.

"A trick mirror," I gasped. "When a room is illuminated you see only your reflection, but it becomes transparent to anyone in the dark on the other side. What a fiend that Shan is!"

"Have we got him?" Bannister exclaimed.

The words roused me from my surprise, but a frenzied search failed to disclose any signs of the man we sought. There were indeed several Orientals, but all were young.

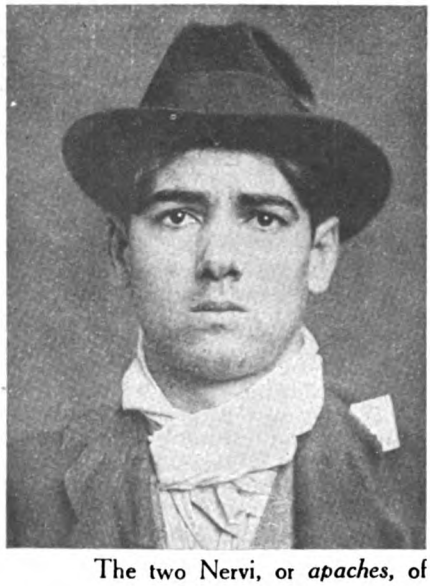
I seized Bannister by the arm, for a sudden thought had startled me.

"Jim, that's another trick mirror at the Arab's house. Come, we must race there. The deaf old lady is an accomplice. The glass deflected your shots and Shan was not wounded. He is probably already on his way to kill El Khefir. Let one of the men telephone to Dufresne and Rousseau. We may catch him yet. These grounds are surrounded and can be searched without our presence."

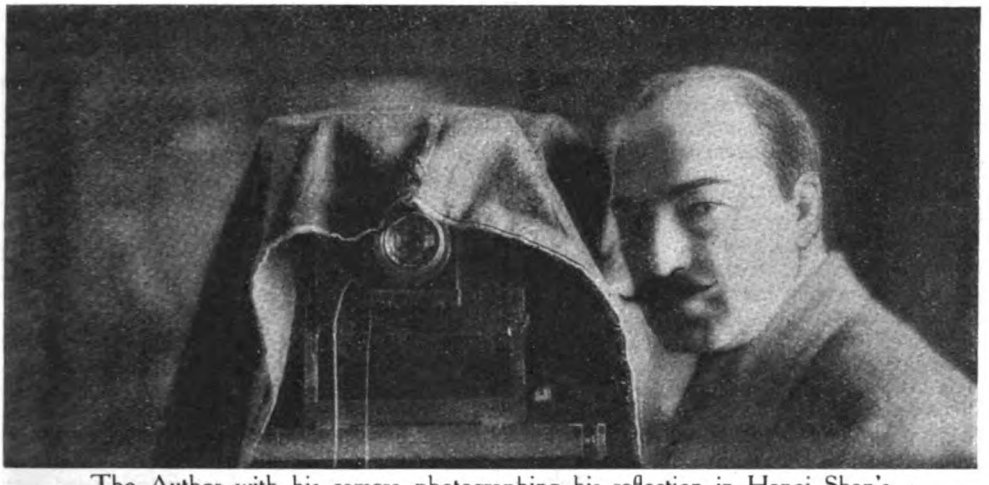
We raced back along the road until we gained the main street. Whilst Bannister telephoned to the Paris Sûreté, I arranged for a car at a near-by garage, and ten minutes later it was roaring along the road to Paris.

THE CENTIPEDE DEATH.

WE arrived just in time to be present at the raid of the house in the rue Malvoisier. Dufresne had already posted cyclist police in hiding at each end of the street and also in all the alleys radiating from it. Silently we crept up the stairs to the flat where the old lady lived, whilst Rousseau and several detectives prepared to watch the topmost rooms and the roof. The janitor's key gave us an easy entrance, and with a rush we were inside and in possession of the premises. That room which had a common wall with the one where Loletta had been found dying was in darkness, except for a sheen of light from the glass above the mantel. I caught a glimpse of a horrible shrunken Chinaman, who was peering with a cruel, gloating expression into the next flat, then he was amongst us, clawing, biting, and stabbing with a large knife. A right hook from Bannister sent him sprawling to the floor,



The two Nervi, or *apaches*, of Marseilles whom Hanoi Shan killed.



The Author with his camera photographing his reflection in Hanoi Shan's **trick mirror.**

and Bertillon at once darted past us and gazed through the mirror.

"Quick!" he shouted, "into the next flat, but beware; there is a giant centipede gripped in El Khebir's neck."

I shall never forget the horrible blue-tinted scene before me, as I too looked through that strange mirror. The Arab was staggering blindly to and fro, squirming and twisting in his agony, his hands tearing at a long dark streak which appeared to be embedded in his flesh.

"Come away," Bannister exclaimed, hoarsely, "it's too horrible. I shall dream of this. All my nerves are twisted in sympathy with that poor devil. I never wish to see such a sight again. That's how the poor girl Loletta died."

Photograph taken *through* the trick mirror.
The Chinese inscription is a threat of death to traitors found at Courbevoie. The knife on the left was found in the body of Chang Foo Lee, and the other daggers are those used to kill the Nervi.

I staggered to the wall, deadly sick with loathing, and switched on the light. Dufresne came over and gave me a drink from his flask.

As we came into the passage we heard wild screams from the open door before us and the words, "Chang Foo Lee! Chang Foo Lee!" repeated again and again in a sort of frenzy. I entered reluctantly enough and saw El Khefir stretched on a bed, panting and shuddering with long, convulsive quivers. The emergency doctor who had come with us was injecting a drug into the man's arm. I looked at his neck and perceived the same swollen punctures running in a double line across his flesh.

"Where is the beast?" I asked with a shudder. Dufresne pointed at a large tin box. "We've got it safely; a burning match across its back soon brought it out. M. Bertillon wishes to examine it, for he thinks its claws have been rendered more virulent by some artifice."

"THE SPIDER'S" REVENGE.

AT that moment the doctor called to my chief:—

"Hurry, if you wish to question the man. He has only a few minutes to live."

Whilst I translated, Bertillon wrote down question and answer :—

"What has happened here to-night?" I asked. The dying man looked at me a moment vaguely. Then he whispered: "I was a member of this Malay devil's band. But he killed my brother and I vowed revenge."

For a long minute the poor fellow's eyes closed again whilst he battled with a fierce convulsion. Then, when the doctor had injected another stimulant, he continued, his voice growing fainter and fainter :—

"He came to me—for shelter—in Buenos Ayres. I tried to kill him, but he was too cunning. He fled in fear of the police, but left his papers and jewels. The names of all his men were on a list. I travelled for months hoping to elude him. He warned me that Chang Foo Lee——"

"Who is Chang Foo Lee?" Bertillon asked.

"An old Chinaman—always helping Shan—he breeds the centipedes—from which Shan makes a poison—my men——"

The head dropped back weakly and we feared that the end had come. With an effort he roused himself to further speech :—

"To-night—I thought to fly—I opened the hidden safe—Chang Foo Lee came from the window—I——"

This time the poison had done its work; the Arab was dead.

Bertillon raised an eyelid and sent the rays of his pocket lamp into the pupil. "An alkaloid of the Veratrine group," he muttered, thoughtfully. "Pupils hyperdilated and slow paralysis of the heart. What do you think, doctor?"

"But the centipede——?"

"Would never kill so quickly; its claws were prepared. Shan wanted to terrify in a spectacular manner, but to prevent speech also! This has been done as a warning to those who might——"

A sudden commotion from upstairs interrupted my chief, just as Colbert and Rousseau came to report.

"Well, Rousseau, did you find anyone up above?" M. Dufresne asked.

"Yes, a negro—he was hidden under the student's bed. He has a box with another centipede, which has a long silken cord fixed to it. Probably there is an opening in the ceiling from which he let the beasts drop on the man and woman. I've not found it yet."

Colbert held out a yellow, dirty sheet of paper covered with unknown symbols. "This was dropped on the balcony and evidently taken from the secret hiding-place, which was a sliding panel at the back of the smashed safe. El Khefir must have opened it to-night, and then the moment they knew the secret he was killed. The bar we fixed across the window is gone. I have men all over the roofs; that is the way he went."

"Yes, it was Chang Foo Lee—no sign of Shan?"

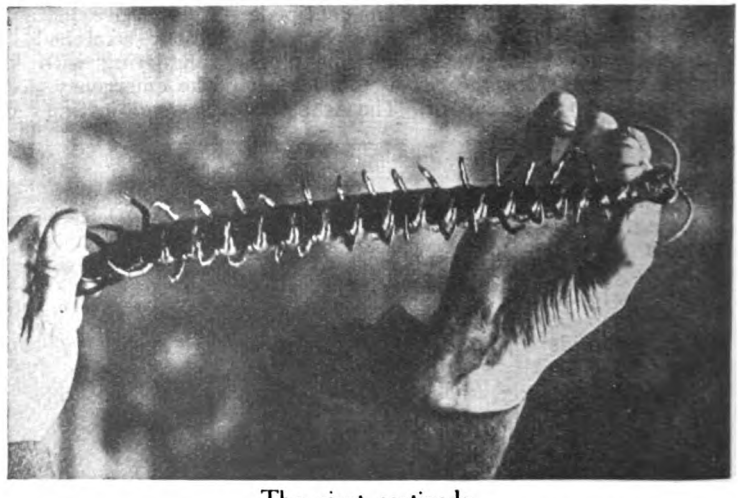
"A motor-cyclist has just arrived from Courbevoie. The man in charge there has discovered a launch moored near the river bank—with a dark figure crouching in it. He thinks that the launch is ready to slip away, but that it is waiting for the man we're after. There are two fast cars below. Shall we go?"

"Your colleague knows how to act if an emergency arises before you get there?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur. If nothing else will avail, his men will shoot to kill."

"Then you'd better go at once. I shall finish my investigation here and Rousseau must remain too, in case we find anyone on the roof."

Bannister at once sprang to the door.



The giant centipede,
showing its size in relation to the human hand. Note the cruel tenacious claws.

'Come on," he cried, excitedly; "perhaps we shall be lucky after all."

SHAN ELUDES US AGAIN.

WE hastily scrambled into the cars and once more roared through the now almost deserted streets. A cyclist stopped us at the Courbevoie bridge. "Come silently, please," he said; "an old woman, or what looks like one, has just accosted the man in the launch, from a rowing boat. They are getting ready for flight, but evidently suspect that detectives are watching."

It was as the man had said. Two figures could be seen dimly in a slim, speedy-looking launch. The mooring rope had gone and the boat was drifting swiftly away from the bank. A whistle sent out a warning to the river police. At the sound the launch roared into life, its propeller churning the water into foam. At the same moment a hail of bullets from a machine-gun in the stern swept the banks. Bannister jumped up, cursing wildly:—

"Darn him! With that weapon he may break through yet. After him! Shoot! shoot!"

But the waiting police boats had now opened fire also. Yells of rage mingled with the staccato bellowing of shots. When we arrived at the point of the *mêlée* we saw that the launch was caught.

"Empty," said Colbert, laconically. "They were both hit and went overboard. Even if they are alive they can't get away. We'll find their bodies when day comes."

But although we dragged the river for days, only the Chinaman Chang Foo Lee was found, and *he had been stabbed with a long Chinese knife*. If the other man was 'the Spider' and got away once more we could not discover.

M. Bertillon was frankly sceptical:—

"We'll never catch him now. I doubt if he is still in France, nor will he show up here again. Thank Heaven, by all the signs he cannot live long, anyhow. There are one or two points which may interest you. The mirrors used by 'the Spider' have been vaguely known, but it is the first time that they have been employed for committing a crime. The lesson is a valuable one. Beware of mirrors—especially if at the back there is another one. I do not know yet how they are made, but they are not silvered. The giant centipedes come from Trinidad. But there was no necessity for them, for the poison on their claws would have been as deadly without them; two milligrams of it produces death."

The negro who stage-managed the centipede's attacks.

"What is it?" I asked.

M. Bertillon shook his head: "The formula is known, but it must remain secret. An indiscretion would give criminals a formidable weapon. Here it is"—and he handed me a slip of paper. "The preparation on the finger-nails was also new, but we have identified the two imprints found on the glass; they belong to the negro. Unfortunately, America wants him, and he will probably go to the electric chair for other crimes committed over there. We have also found a complete burglar's outfit, and the levers which forced the safe have been identified. The Nervi were well known in Marseilles. I have their charts; it's as well they are dead. The best find was the parchment. It is Indo-Chinese, Shan's language, and gives us information which will lead to the capture of many members of his organization abroad. Perhaps through them we may yet find 'the Spider.' By the way, those hairs were interesting. Under the microscope, you see a distinct difference between the broad, lighter-coloured Chinese hair, probably Chang Foo Lee's, the Arab's, and those of his wife. Every case brings us new knowledge, and Shan is a good teacher in that respect."

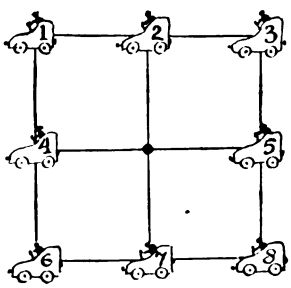
(*Next month: "The Tattooed Men."*)

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

895.—EIGHT MOTOR-CARS.

MAKE a rough diagram similar to that given and place eight numbered counters at the points indicated by the motor-cars. That is in the order :—



1	2	3
4	·	5
6	7	8

There is one vacant point in the centre. The puzzle is to move one car at a time from point to point until the numbers on the cars form a little magic square adding up the same in the three rows three columns, and two long diagonals. It can be done in as few as nineteen moves in two different ways. Can you find one or both of the solutions ?

896.—ANOTHER STREET PUZZLE.

I HAVE given in the past in these pages various puzzles dealing with the numbers on the opposite sides of a street, and will here state, for those interested, that full and detailed solutions will be found in my last book, "Modern Puzzles" (C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., 3s 6d.). Here is another example (suggested by Mr. W. Chevis) of the same class, though really quite different, which I think will be found interesting.

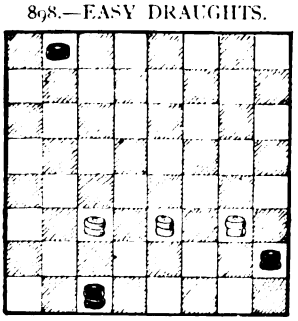
The houses in a certain street were numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., consecutively down one side and up the other, so that the last number was opposite to No 1. But the Local Authorities decided to renumber the street, one side taking the odd numbers, 1, 3, 5, etc., and the other side the even ones, 2, 4, 6, etc. But this time the numbering began on the other side of the street so that the old No. 1 became No. 2. It was then found that the only house that retained its old number was No. 181. How many houses were there in the whole street ?

897.—MISSING WORDS.

STANDING . . . . . before him,
Into gentle chaff she broke,
And . . . . . him for being . . . . . .
In her presence as they spoke.

The three missing words all contain the same six letters.

898.—EASY DRAUGHTS.



HERE is another easy problem in draughts, by E. Hull. How would you play White's pieces so as to win ?

899.—THE YEAR 1927.

A FRENCH correspondent sent me the following curiosity, but it unfortunately arrived a few weeks too late to appear, as one would like it to have done, in the year to which it applies. Can you find values for p and q so that $p^q - q^p = 1927$? To make it perfectly clear I give an example for the year 1844, where p = 3 and q = 7.

$$3^7 - 7^3 = 1844.$$

Can you express 1927 in the same curious way ?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

890.—A MONMOUTH TOMBSTONE.

THE number of different ways in which "HERE LIES JOHN RENIE" can be read is 45,760, or, if diagonal readings are allowed, 91,520, because on reaching one of the corner I's we have the option of ending in the extreme corner or going backwards to an E diagonally. I wish I could find room to explain in detail how I arrive at the answer, but on writing it out I find it impracticable. The only other information on the stone is, "who died May 31, 1832, aged 32 years."

891.—AN OLD ENIGMA

THE answer is A THORN.

892.—A TRIANGLE PUZZLE.

IF you extend the following table you may get as many rational right-angled triangles with consecutive numbers as you like.

p	q	Height	Area.
2	4	3	6
8	14	12	84
30	52	45	1170
112	194	168	16296
418	724	627	226974
1560	2702	2340	3161340

Here three times the square of p added to 4 will make the square of q. Every value of p is four times the last number less the previous one, and q is found in the same way after the first step. The height is half as much again as p and the area is the height multiplied by half of q. The middle number of our three sides will always be found as q. The last line will give us the first case where the area is divisible by 20. The triangle is 2701, 2702, 2703, with height 2340

893.—CHANGED HEADS.

THE answer is : ROUBLE—DOUBLE—TROUBLE.

894.—THE MOVING STAIRCASE.

LET n equal number of steps in staircase and take as unit of time the time taken by one step to disappear at bottom.

The second man takes 75 steps in $n - 75$ units of time, or (dividing by 25) 3 steps in $\frac{n-75}{25}$ units. Therefore first man takes 1 step in $\frac{n-75}{25}$ units. But first man also takes 50 steps in $n - 50$ units of time, or 1 step in $\frac{n-50}{50}$ units of time. Therefore $\frac{n-50}{50} = \frac{n-75}{25}$ and $n = 100$, the required answer

Green Glass

By

Bob du Soe

Illustrated by
W. E. WIGHTMAN

MATSON closed the door of his room and quietly descended the stairs to the combined dining-room, bar, and office of his dingy boarding-house. Had there been any other exit, he would gladly have taken it, but there wasn't. Tim McDuffy, who presided over the establishment, had seen to that.

It was not that Matson would have deliberately walked out without paying, for the boarding-house master had been very decent about the overdue account. They were both aware of its existence, nevertheless, and to Matson the situation was becoming a source of worry. He had heard that Honolulu was a bad port for stranded seamen, but he would never have believed it could be as dead as he had found it.

McDuffy greeted him with the usual "Good morning," and then, after a quick glance about the room, motioned for him to enter the little office.

Matson could think of nothing but the overdue account, but there was no escape.

"Well, what luck?" the proprietor inquired.

Matson shook his head.

"None. Every ship that's put in here for the last two months has had a full crew."

McDuffy stroked his chin with a sly display of wisdom. "Did you ever hear of Wing Lee?" he asked.

"Sure," Matson returned, wondering what that had to do with the bill. "Who hasn't heard of him?"

"Well, he's got a job for you if you want it. I know the old Chink pretty well, and he came to me because he wants a white man."

Matson did not relish the thought of working for a Chinaman, but he was broke and in no position to be particular.

"What's the job?"

"You remember that brig that piled up on Hermes Reef?"

"Sure."

"Well, did you hear that Captain Bartt was going down there with the *Amy B.* to take off the cargo?"

"Yes; haven't I been trying to get on with him? He turned me down cold only yesterday."

"That's hard luck. Gettin' a berth on the *Amy B.* is part of the job. Wing Lee wants his own man on her for some reason. Wouldn't say what for—wants to be sure of his man first."

"Well, I'm ready to tackle anything if there's money in sight, but I've already pestered old Bartt to the limit."

"Don't worry about that; if you and Wing can get together, he'll see that you get aboard all right. I told him you was a friend of mine, and he could depend upon you. The rest of it's up to you."

"I'll tackle anything short of murder," Matson declared, and, leaving the water-front boarding-house, he headed down Queen Street to River Street, where Wing Lee kept a grocery shop.

Wing Lee himself was about as Occidental as his grocery shop. He wore an ordinary business suit, with collar and tie, but his finger-nails were half an inch long, and his coarse grey hair was clipped like a convict's. When Matson entered he was seated at a littered desk, sipping tea from a cup no larger than a thimble.

"I'm Matson," the young seaman introduced himself. "McDuffy told me you had a job for me."

The Chinaman glanced quickly about the shop, and shoved forward a stool. The one clerk was busy with an Oriental customer. "You good sailorman?" he inquired.

"Guess I am," Matson returned. "Never been told I wasn't."

"Mr. McDuffy tell you about the *Amy B.?*"

"Yes, I know all about her. Been trying to get on with the crew, but couldn't manage it."

Wing Lee tapped the desk with his long finger-nails. "Suppose I make place for you on this boat, you like do special job for me?"

"That all depends; let's hear what it is."

The Chinaman glanced about the shop again, and then launched into his explanation. "I got one friend on this wrecked boat, he China-boy from Hong-Kong—him cook. My cousin in Peking, he give this boy package for me, but I no catch him. Captain from wrecked boat, he tell me China-boy drown, but I no know—I no think so. This captain, he go back to wreck now, on the *Amy B.* Mr. McDuffy tell me he goin' be mate."

"Wait a minute," Matson interrupted. "How did this China-boy come to be cook on the wrecked barque? She was never in Hong-Kong. She sailed from Manila."

Wing Lee smiled. "He smart boy—he know it is better to come here from Manila than Hong-Kong. Not so much trouble that way."

"What was in this package he had for you?"

"Jade."

"Eh?" Matson scoffed. "Who'd kill a man for that stuff? I can buy a barrel of it for ten dollars."

Wing Lee shook his head. "There is jade, and there is green glass. One is not worth ten dollars for the barrel—the other is worth more than a barrel of dollars for one small piece. Jade of the five good spirits from the Ming's tombs—jade from Yunnan that was a gift to the great Hung Hsi. That is the jade I speak of."

Matson shrugged his shoulders "It's all green glass to me. What do you want me to do about it?"

The Chinaman brought his chair a little closer and spoke in a guarded tone. "This man Copeland, who was captain of the wrecked boat, has spent many years in China. I think he knows jade, and that he goes back on the *Amy B.* for more than to save his cargo. That is why I want you to go—to watch him, and if you bring me the package I will pay good."

"If he killed this China-boy of yours, he must have the stuff already."

"He would not go back if he did. He would have too much money now to bother."

"What will you pay me if I get it?"

'One thousand dollars," Wing Lee answered, with no more emotion than if he had offered fifty cents.

Matson whistled. "Listen to me, Wing; there's something more behind this than you're tellin'. Your tribe don't hand out money like that for nothing."

'I have told you all I know. I pay good because I want you to bring me the jade."

"One thousand dollars," Matson repeated. "Well, I'm your man, Wing. How am I going to get Bartt to sign me on?"

"They go to-morrow morning. One sailorman will not be there. He will not be there no matter how long they wait. Is that enough?"

"I savvy," Matson grinned. "If you can manage that, I'll get aboard all right."

Wing Lee arose and offered his hand. "I think it is more better you say nothing; maybe somebody else know jade, too."

"Don't worry; I've got sense enough to know that."

The customer, with whom the clerk had been occupied, completed his purchases

as Matson left the store, and shuffled along ahead of him to Queen Street. He stopped at the corner, and Matson remembered, as he caught up with him, that the Chinaman had been standing there when he rounded the corner a half-hour earlier. It occurred to him that the man might be watching him, but on second thought he scoffed at the idea.

THE next morning Matson was on the dock early. He made no attempt to see Captain Bartt; from all appearances he was merely a casual spectator. The schooner *Amy B.*, a trim craft of around one hundred and fifty tons, was ready for sea. Two working boats, to be used in transferring the cargo, had been hoisted on board.

Captain Bartt mopped his fat face with a dirty shirt-sleeve and gazed impatiently up the dock. Ex-Captain Copeland, now mate, made sure once more that everything was in order and joined the captain on the poop. The tug was due any minute, and Matson could easily imagine what they were talking about.

It had been a simple matter, that of

"I'm Matson," the young seaman introduced himself. "McDuffy told me you had a job for me."

detaining one of the schooner's crew. McDuffy had been generous with the drinks, and Wing Lee's cab-driver had seen to the rest.

A tug headed into the slip while Matson was recalling the incident, and he decided it was time to make known his presence. Moving along the dock to the schooner's poop, he touched his cap to the old skipper.

"I'm a man short this morning," the captain growled. "Ain't seen nothin' of him, have you?"

"Saw one of 'em last night," Matson answered, truthfully, "but I haven't seen him since. He had a bad list when I saw him and the evening was only started."

The tug whistled.

"How about letting me go in his place?" Matson inquired.

"I can't wait for you to get your dunnage."

"I don't need any; I'll go the way I stand."

The captain glanced up the deck again, but there was no sign of the missing seaman. "All right," he snapped; "find that fool's dunnage and throw it on the dock."

Matson climbed aboard immediately and started for the fo'c'stle. Opposite the galley door he came face to face with the cook and found it difficult to hide his surprise. It was the Chinaman who had aroused his suspicions the day before at Wing Lee's. If the Oriental recognized him he concealed the fact also. The stolid expression on his wrinkled face never changed.

WHEN Matson returned from the fo'c'stle with the absent seaman's belongings, he saw the mate and the captain observing him from the poop. He felt sure now that his connection with Wing Lee was known to both the mate, the cook, and maybe the captain. If these men were all in quest of the same few pieces of green glass, he felt that his own chances of getting near it were slim. He doubted, though, if the captain was after it. It was not likely that he would have given him a berth if he were. Matson wondered, too, if there was any understanding between the mate and the cook, and the more he thought of it, the more it puzzled him.

When the hawser had been run out, and the shore lines cast free of the bitts, he took time to observe the rest of the crew. There were six men forward, including himself, in addition to three officers, and the cook. The third officer, whose duties hovered between that of second mate and bo'sun, was the most intelligent-looking man in the afterguard.

The six men forward were the usual mixture: two Kanakas, a Portuguese, a Scandinavian, and one other American besides Matson. They were more than enough to handle the small fore-and-after, which gave promise of an easy run down to the reef, but they all knew what to expect when they reached the wreck.

The canvas was run up with dispatch when the tug cast off, and the captain shouted "Tops'ls!" almost immediately. The vessel heeled over to the steady trades without a protest, and the white water began purring away from her bows.

"You there, you beachcomber!" the mate shouted at Matson. "Can you steer?"

Matson bit his lip until he could speak calmly. "My name is Matson," he replied, "and I'm rated able."

"The deuce you are! Well, take the wheel, and I'll soon tell how able you are."

The men looked up from their work in amazement. The mate's words were uncalled for, and the outburst filled them with apprehension. Matson climbed to the poop and took the wheel from Mr. Ingles, the second, who had been steering their course through the channel. Captain Bartt himself seemed a little surprised, but he said nothing, and a few minutes later he went below.

Matson wanted to avoid trouble, if possible, and he was extremely careful. The schooner's wake fell astern in a perfect ribbon, so that Copeland could make no complaint. He strode aft, however, when the poop had been cleared, and stood by the wheel, glaring at his helmsman.

"Don't think for a minute you're putting anything over on me," he growled in an undertone. "Why were you so darn anxious to get aboard this schooner? What did you do with that fool seaman after you got him drunk?"

Matson saw that the cabin transom was open, and he knew by the mate's tone that he did not want to be overheard by the captain. The fact settled a question that had been worrying him. "I don't know what you're talking about, sir," he answered. "I wanted a berth on the schooner because I was broke. I don't know what became of the man who didn't turn up."

"You're lying," Copeland snapped. "Don't forget I know your game, and I'll get you the first time you play any fancy tricks."

Matson gripped the spokes until his knuckles showed white, but he smothered his rage and let the insult pass. He knew now why Wing Lee had made such a generous offer—the job was going to be worth it.

There were no watches set, except duty at the wheel. Each man took his turn at that, but the rest of the day he was obliged to set to overhauling the gear. Captain Bartt had evidently decided it would be a

good opportunity to put his schooner in order. When it became necessary to tack, reef, or in any way man the vessel, the whole crew was called out, night or day, whether they were all needed or not. Copeland did his work like a "Bluenose" mate in the days of clippers.

TWO hundred miles north-west of Kauai, the traditional south-east trades died out abruptly and left the *Amy B.* rolling in an oily swell. The sun burned down until the pitch bubbled in the deck-seams.

Copeland's bullying increased. He gave Matson the hardest and dirtiest jobs he could find, and the second day of the calm he set him to chipping the rusty anchor chain. The fo'c'stle snapped and cracked with the heat, and the heavy chain was too hot for bare hands to touch. For the second time during the morning he came forward and gloated over Matson while he worked. "Well, you wanted a job on this schooner," he sneered; "how do you like it?"

Matson did not even look up. He knew his tormentor had but one object in mind—the desire to put him safely out of the way. A single blow would have given him the excuse he looked for The irons or a bullet would have been the result for Matson.

"How do you like it, eh?" the mate repeated.

Matson remained silent.

"Darn you! Why don't you answer me?" the bully shouted, and, kicking out with his heavy boot, he caught the kneeling man in the ribs.

Matson staggered to his feet and faced the mate. The next moment he would have landed on the sneering mouth, but down on deck near the galley he caught sight of the cook. The Chinaman was grinning gleefully, the first change of expression that had come over his wrinkled face since leaving Honolulu. It suddenly struck Matson that the Oriental was as anxious to see him out of the way as the mate—that he would be a fool to play into their hands.

Seeing he hesitated, Copeland egged him on. "Coward!" he snorted. "What are you waiting for?"

Attracted by Copeland's loud bawling, the crew gathered forward and added their shouts to the disturbance. There was not one among them who had not grown to hate Copeland. "Kill him, Yank!" yelled Portuguese Joe. "We're with you!"

Matson smiled to himself. He knew that in a square fight the little Portuguese would be the first to go down.

"He's a coward himself," the Scandinavian shouted. "He's trying to bluff!"

The only level-headed advice came from Davis, the other American. He was a silent, morose man, but a good seaman, and no fool. "Look out for his gun, Yank!" his voice carried above the others, and Matson noticed that one of the mate's hands was creeping towards his hip-pocket.

"No, you don't—not this time." Matson shook his head. "If you draw that thing it will be plain murder."

Copeland removed his hand with an oath and turned on the jeering men. "Get out of this, darn you!" he roared. "If you fools think you've been working on this tub, you wait until I get through with you!"

The men backed away, grumbling as they went. They were in a bad humour, but they had not yet reached the point where they cared to face a gun. Captain Bartt appeared, as usual, when the trouble was all over, and, seeing nothing to be alarmed over, ducked below again.

COPELAND kept his word. He cursed and abused the men at the slightest excuse, but no one gave him a chance really to extend himself until the late afternoon. The little Portuguese was the victim, purely by accident.

The chicken-coop, lashed beside the galley, had been selected by the mate for a thorough cleaning, and he had ordered Joe to the task. No one knew of the trouble until they heard a squawk from one of the chickens, and saw it fly to the rail. It struck the men as amusing until they heard the mate roar, and saw the Portuguese grab for the escaped fowl. There was another squawk, and the chicken went over the side into the water.

"Go after him, you thick-headed fool!" the mate cried. "What are you standing there gaping for?"

"I can't, sir!" the confused seaman whined. "I can't swim—so help me, I can't!"

"Well, darn you, it's time you were learnin'," Copeland swore, and reached for him.

The Portuguese fled into the galley in terror, and Matson, watching the scene from the fo'c'stle, saw the cook thrust a knife into his hand. In a flash the little seaman was out of the galley again and rushing Copeland with the knife.

He made a sorry mess of the attack. The mate caught the arm which held the knife and twisted it cruelly. When the weapon struck the deck, he backed his victim against the galley, where he held him with one hand while he beat him senseless with the other. When he stepped back the little Portuguese lay in a heap on the deck.

"What's the trouble, Mr. Copeland?" the captain called from the poop.

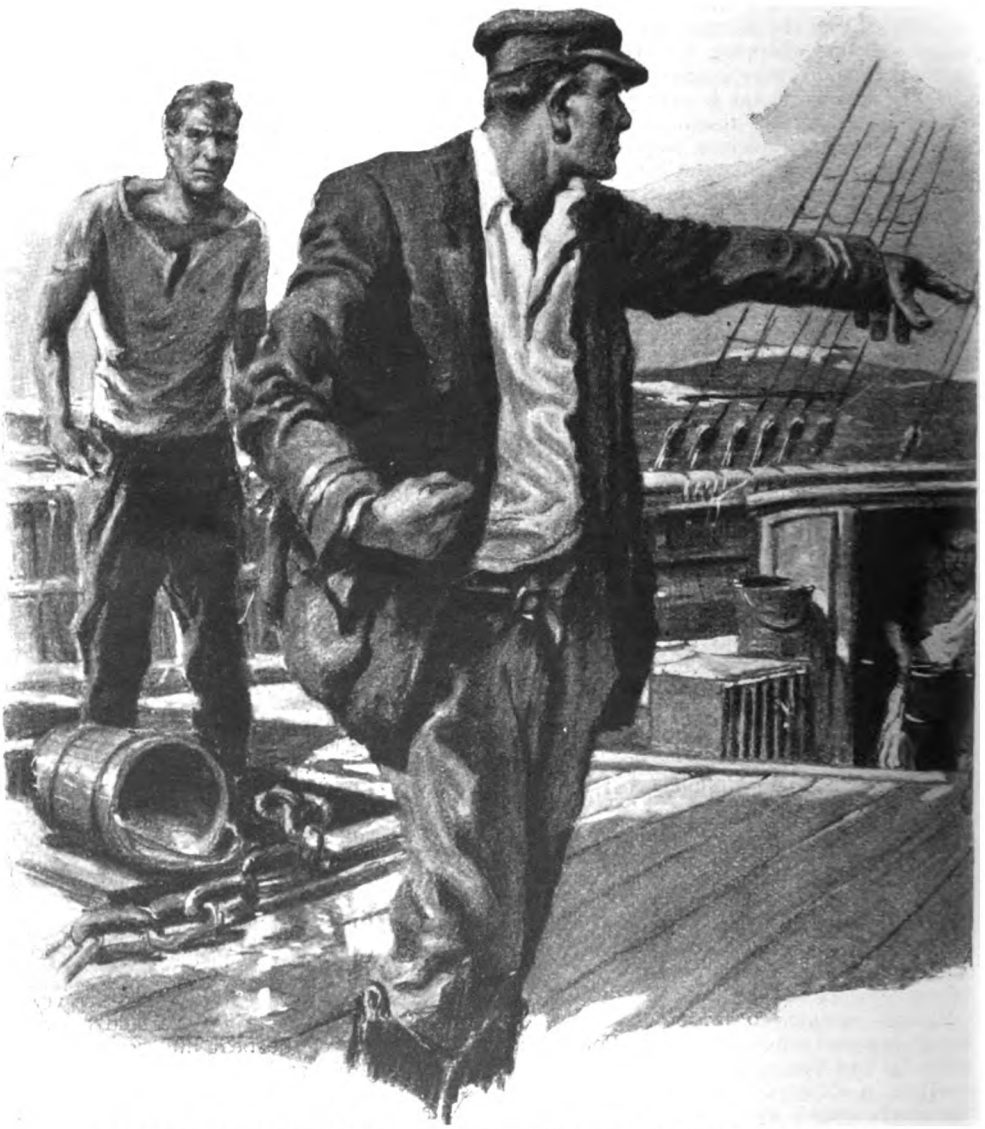
The mate pointed to the drowning chicken, now some distance from the schooner. "Teachin' this fool how to clean a chicken-coop without turning them all loose."

"Was it a hen or a rooster, Mr. Copeland?" the captain inquired.

"I didn't have time to examine it," the mate laughed.

To Matson the incident meant more than the cruel beating of the seaman. He knew that a Court would have upheld the mate had he even killed the man, for there was no denying the wild attack with the knife. Matson, however, knew what Copeland did not, and that was the fact that the Chinaman had deliberately thrust the knife into the Portuguese's hand. There could be no better proof of the feeling between the cook and the mate, and another question was settled in Matson's mind.

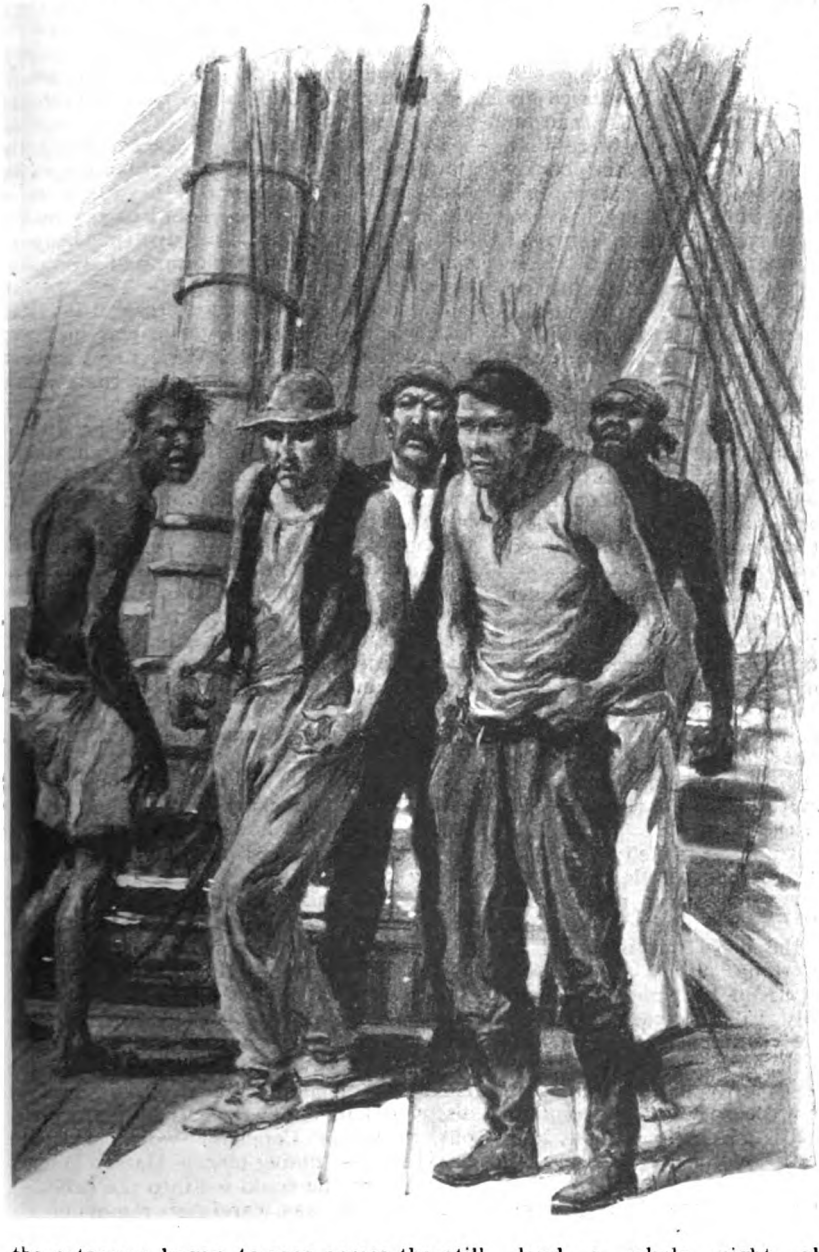
There was a lot of wild talk that night among the men, but he knew, as did Davis, that nothing would come of it. Matson had heard more than one crew threaten mutiny during an entire voyage, only to forget it when land was sighted, and even



Copeland turned on the jeering men. "Get out of this!" he roared.

bid the mate a hearty farewell at parting. He had a score to settle with Copeland himself, but there was more important business to be attended to first.

The calm lasted another day, and then



the catspaws began to race across the still water again, as abruptly as they had ceased. In less than half an hour the *Amy B.* was scudding along under full sail, seemingly as thankful of the fresh breeze as the men. Captain Bartt came on deck long enough to take a sight and set his course and make a round of his schooner. He was apparently satisfied, for the men saw him nod with approval to his mate, and then waddle back down the companionway.

Five days later the one remaining mast of the wrecked barque was sighted, and towards evening the anchor was let go as near to the reef as possible. The slack chain had hardly run out before the mate ordered a boat put out, and selected the two Kanakas to man it. Captain Bartt watched the preparations with slight interest. It struck Matson that he had slight interest in anything but his cabin.

"I may stay aboard tonight and look things over," Copeland called to the captain.

"Good idea," the captain agreed; "we'll get busy with the cargo first thing in the morning."

Matson swore to himself. What chance would he have of finding the things he was after, with Copeland a whole night ahead of him? He wondered how the Chinaman felt about it, and, glancing towards the galley, he saw the cook frowning on the departing boat from the top of the wood pile.

A LIGHT appeared on board the wreck when it grew dark, and a little later the Kanakas returned alone. Copeland had never had the slightest intention of returning, and it angered Matson to think that he was being beaten so easily. He watched the light for a long time and then decided on a desperate move. Stretching out on deck, he pretended to sleep.

An hour later the others had followed his example, with the exception of the man on anchor watch, and the chances were that he dozed also. The light in the cook's quarters, just forward of the galley, had been out for some time. Making his way quietly to the bulwarks, Matson removed his shirt and shoes and climbed over. There were sharks in the vicinity, but he had decided to risk them, and letting go the slippery hull he struck out for the reef.

The bow of the wrecked barque was high and dry where the heavy seas had driven her, but the stern hung over a shelf of considerable depth. Matson marvelled, as he swam alongside, that the hull had not given way under the strain and broken in two. The wreckage from the fallen mast afforded easy means of boarding, and a few minutes later he was standing on the littered deck.

The light he had seen from the schooner was burning in the galley, and, making his way cautiously forward, he peered in through the open door. Copeland was there, examining the lining of a tattered coat. Casting the garment aside, he caught up a pair of trousers, and after turning the pockets inside out he ripped the leg the full length of the seam. He found nothing, and, muttering to himself, kicked at something on the floor.

Matson was not able to make out what it was at first, but, creeping a little nearer, he had a better view. The hair nearly rose on his back. It was the withered remains of a man, and the mate was occupied in undressing the thing. Even as Matson watched, he ripped off the shirt and then dropped excitedly to his knees. Twisted and rotting, where it stuck to the skeleton, was a money-belt.

Copeland tore it away and examined it carefully, but he was evidently disappointed. He threw the belt down with a curse, and kicked again at the human remains.

AS Matson stood watching the disgusting scene, a noise on deck caught his ear. Slinking back into the shadow of the fo'c'stle, he waited for a repetition of the sound. It did not come, but presently a form moved towards the galley and peered in through the open door as he had done. It was the Chinese cook from the schooner, and Matson crouched lower, awaiting the next move expectantly.

The minutes dragged slowly and his muscles ached from the cramped position, but the Chinaman did not move. Inside the galley, Copeland was leaving not a thing unturned in his search. Once more he went through the rags and the money-belt, and then, gathering them up in disgust, he strode out of the galley and threw the things over the side.

The Chinaman escaped detection by the fraction of a second. He darted quickly back into the shadow of the fo'c'stle, so close to Matson that he could have touched him. Copeland gathered up the heap of skin and bones next, and dumped them over the side, as he had the rags.

Matson had no doubt that the dead man was the Chinese boy who was supposed to have been drowned. Wing Lee had been right in the doubts he held, but there would be no proving the matter now.

The boy's quarters had been just aft the galley, and, satisfied with his search among the rusted pots, the mate took his lantern and moved into the adjoining cabin. He hung the lantern up, and then, returning to the open deck, stood still, peering into the darkness around him. Stepping out of the shaft of light that streamed through the cabin doorway, he rounded the galley and crossed to the other side of the deck. The lights of the schooner were visible beyond, and he stood by the rail, watching and listening.

In a flash the Chinaman slipped from the shadow of the fo'c'stle and darted into the lighted cabin. On the way Matson saw him jerk a small package from beneath his jacket. He could not see what he did with it, but in a second he was back again, hiding in the shadow.

Copeland returned from the rail, gazed about him again, and entered the cabin. The instant he was out of sight the Chinaman crept aft across the littered deck and disappeared as he had come.

A dozen questions flashed through Matson's brain. What could be the Chinaman's intentions? What was in the package? If it contained the jade, where had he discovered it, and why had he deliberately put it where Copeland would find it? Leaving his hiding-place, Matson moved out to where he could see into the cabin.

The mate was carefully removing the straw from a flimsy mattress, a handful at a time. He finished with an oath and kicked the stuff out on deck. A bundle of clothing under the bunk drew his attention next, and he pulled it out. A small package came with it, and rolled along the floor.

Matson held his breath while Copeland

tore it open. He was not close enough to see what it contained, but the exclamation of satisfaction that burst from the mate was enough. In one leap Matson entered the cabin and snatched the package from the amazed finder.

Thrusting it into his pocket, he turned to leave, but Copeland had recovered from his surprise and was reaching for his hip-pocket. Matson swung at his jaw with all his strength and grabbed for the gun. The weapon fell to the floor in the scuffle, and they clinched.

Jabbing right and left, Matson fought free of the man's hold and backed out of the cabin. He had no intention of fleeing; he wanted room in which to fight. The sneers and insults he had swallowed were not forgotten, and he squared away for the battle with a relish.

Copeland rushed him, arms flying and head down, blind with rage. The sheer weight of him sent Matson staggering back. Thinking he had the advantage, the mate kept on with a vicious swing of his right. It landed in space, and sent him off his balance. Matson connected with a left in the instant that followed, and closed the mate's eye. Another jab at his body doubled him up.

It was not the method of fighting that Copeland was used to. He glanced down at the deck for something to use as a club, but Matson would not give him time to find it. He straightened him up with an uppercut, and tried with a left. It was a bad mistake, for he missed, and before he could recover the mate had him in his grasp.

Matson was startled at the strength of the man's arms. His vicious jabs failed this time to free him. His jaw snapped from a butt of the mate's head, and the next second a knee caught him in the stomach. The pain sickened him, but he knew that he dare not relax in his struggle. With a mighty effort he wrenched free, and, catching the mate's arm, jerked it under his own and across his knee.

It was an old trick, but a good one. His victim kicked and screamed in terror. Another ounce of pressure and the arm would have snapped, but Matson, in spite of Copeland's foul fighting, had not the heart to break it. He shoved him away and finished the struggle with a swing on his jaw.

The subdued mate rolled over in a heap and lay still. Matson gazed down at him until he had regained his own breath, and then his thoughts returned to the package. Stepping over to the lighted cabin, he took it from his pocket and fingered the oddly shaped pieces of jade. To him it was still green glass.

Pushing the package back in his pocket, he returned to where the mate still lay on the deck. He moved slightly and groaned, and Matson knew that in a few minutes he would be on his feet again, cursing worse than before. There was nothing to be gained by staying there to hear it, so he picked his way back to the fallen mast and climbed down to the water.

The swim across to the schooner cooled his thoughts as well as his body, and when he had wrung out his trousers and donned his shirt he felt little the worse for the experience. Financially he was supposed to be a thousand dollars better off, but his common sense told him differently. The Chinaman would never have planted the package under Copeland's nose if it had been worth anything.

Now that he had the package it troubled him to know what to do with it. The mate would be after it again, he felt sure, and probably the Chinaman. The riddle was too much and he gave up trying to fathom it.

CAPTAIN BARTT appeared in his pyjamas the next morning and gave his orders between yawns. The second mate was chosen to remain on the schooner with two men, and see to stowing the cargo as it was brought alongside. Copeland, with two others, was to supervise the work on the wreck. The two Kanakas were given the job of rowing the working boats back and forth.

Matson was on good terms with the second mate, and did not hesitate to express his desire to remain on the schooner. The Portuguese chose the schooner also, which was agreeable to the other two. In this way the labour was divided, and within an hour the cargo was moving.

The last boatload for the day came alongside the schooner at sundown, with Copeland and his helpers seated on top of the bales. The mate climbed to the deck with a gruff word to the second, and went straight to his cabin. Davis, the other American, was next out of the boat, and he glanced sharply at Matson as he stepped on deck. "Didn't go over to the wreck last night, did you?" he asked.

Matson feigned surprise. "What would I be doing over there?"

"Search me, but I couldn't make out who else it would be. The mate must have got lonesome for a scrap and picked on himself, then. He sure got a beautiful eye, and he's been bullying worse than ever all day."

Matson was thankful that he bore no marks of the fight. "It must have been Portygee Joe," he laughed.

The men made themselves comfortable on the fo'c'stle after supper and talked for an

hour or more. Copeland had not appeared again, but Matson kept a steady watch over the poop. He had distributed the contents of the package about his clothing so that it would not be noticeable, but it worried him even then. While the men were absorbed in an argument he slipped away and hid the stuff in the forepeak.

He stretched out on deck with the others when the yarning ended, but, unlike them, he did not sleep. For over an hour he lay still, watching the changing shadows. He had no idea what to expect from Copeland, but he had no intention of being caught asleep.

THE movement that finally rewarded his vigilance occurred much nearer than the poop. A slinking form crept out from beside the galley and hurried across the deck. Matson knew by the man's gait that it was the Chinaman, and, darting across to the rail, he saw the Oriental climb down to one of the boats. If something remained on the wreck that interested the Chinaman, he decided that it would interest him also, and he swam after the disappearing boat.

He found it tied to the fallen mast when he reached the wreck, and, after making sure that its late occupant had gained the deck above, he climbed after him. At the bulwarks he waited and listened until a faint light appeared in the galley, and then picked his way forward. The cook was already occupied as the mate had been the night before—searching the galley.

Matson was convinced now that the jade he had fought for was worthless, but he wavered between two reasons for the Chinaman's actions. Either the fake jade was meant to throw Copeland off the track, which it appeared to have done, or there was something on the wreck of much more value. He would have enjoyed squeezing the heathen's skinny neck until he told the truth, but the result was too uncertain.

If anyone was in a position to make a thorough search of the galley, it was the cook. Matson watched him with interest while he went carefully over the stove and then examined each brick in the floor. Finding nothing there, he turned next to the wooden framework that supported the sides and roof of the structure. He tapped each one of these, but found them all solid, and then started on the pots and cooking utensils.

It took time for all this, and Matson grew anxious as to the hour. If daylight caught him off the schooner, his movements would be known to all. The Chinaman evidently had the same thought in mind, for he stopped his search frequently to come to the door and glance at the sky.

The sleeping quarters adjoining the galley were given the same close inspection, and Matson kept as close watch as he dared. It was here that the mate had been interrupted. The result, however, was the same, and when the Chinaman put out his light at last and returned to the schooner, Matson felt sure that a more thorough search could not have been made.

The handling of cargo went on the next day as it had the first, without incident. Copeland returned from the wreck on the last load of the day, and again went straight to his cabin. The night, too, was the same. The Chinaman returned to the wreck and resumed his search; this time in the storerooms. Matson followed him, and though he could not keep as close watch as he had on the galley, he knew by the Chinaman's actions that he was still unsuccessful.

It was Davis, the other American, on the third morning, who confirmed the suspicions that Matson already held. "I don't know your game, Yank," the seaman said, in his usual blunt manner, "but the mate suspects you. He was lookin' for you last night—prowled around for a coupla hours. I think he missed the boat, too."

Matson's nerves were on edge from loss of sleep, or he would have realized that the man meant to be friendly. He answered with a few curt words, and went on with his breakfast.

That night, however, he watched the poop more closely, and, instead of immediately following the Chinaman when he slipped out of the galley, he lay still. The cook had hardly reached the boat when Copeland ran down from the poop and ordered him back. The Oriental started to obey, but the mate did not wait for him to reach the deck. He caught him a terrific blow as he climbed over the bulwarks, and knocked him into the scuppers.

Copeland must have realized his mistake then, for he stepped back with an exclamation of surprise. "You, too!" he cried. "How long have you been mixed up in this?"

The Chinaman did not answer, but the next moment a knife flashed and he leaped from the scuppers straight at Copeland.

"Stop it, you heathen!" the mate roared, but the Chinaman was enraged beyond hearing.

Matson saw them come together; saw them struggle for a minute, and then heard a body hit the deck. Unless the first thrust of the knife had found its mark, he knew the fallen man would be the Chinaman. There was a long silence, and then he knew he had judged correctly. Copeland came boldly forward, glanced at the sleeping men sprawled out on the deck, and at the dozing

Matson's vicious jabs failed this time to free him.

anchor watch on the fo'c'stle. One of the Kanakas groaned in a troubled dream, and turned over. When the Kanaka slept again the mate returned to the limp heap on the deck, dropped it over the rail, and returned to the poop.

Matson had no desire to visit the wreck after that, but, tired as he was, he did not sleep for a long time. The Portuguese awoke from his stolen nap on the fo'c'stle and, arousing Davis to take his place, turned in and slept soundly.

By daybreak the murder was known to everyone. The blood-smeared deck and rail proved that it was nothing else. Captain Bartt, barefoot and clad in his pyjamas, came to examine the evidence. "Does anyone know anything about this?" he demanded of the awestruck men.

They muttered "No," and shook their heads.

"Mr. Copeland—Mr. Ingles," he turned to the mates, "there has been a murder. We have got to find the man who did it."

"Well, I'm sure there are none of us aft who had any reason for killing a fool heathen," Copeland spoke up.

"Hardly," the captain agreed, as the men felt sure he would.

"That puts it up to one of you." Copeland faced the men. "Which of you was on watch last night?" He glared at Matson, but Matson had done his watch early the night before.

"Come on," the mate snapped, "step out."

The Portuguese, Davis, and one of the Kanakas stepped forward.

"Well, what do you know?" he demanded. "A murder couldn't be pulled here on the open deck without one of you knowing something about it."

There was no reply from the men.

"Who had the last watch this morning?" he demanded.

The Kanaka nodded.

"All right, that lets you out. Blood won't dry like that in two or three hours."

The Kanaka stepped back, relieved.

"Davis, you were on from midnight until four?"

Davis nodded.

"Do you know anything about this?"

"No, sir."

"You've stood the watch other nights. Did you ever see anything out of the way?"

"Yes, I saw the Chink slip away one night and put off for the wreck in one of the boats."

This was news to Copeland, and he could not entirely conceal his surprise. "Why didn't you say something about it?" he snapped.

"You were up and about, too, sir," Davis returned, calmly. "I thought you knew about it."

The mate scowled and his fists clenched. He was bullying the wrong man, and he knew it. "It's my business to be up and watching you devils," he growled. "You lie when you say I knew anything about the Chink."

"I was only answering your question, sir."

"Well, someone's going to hang for this if he *is* only a Chink, and it's no time for guesswork."

Copeland turned from Davis to the Portuguese and glared at him a moment in silence. Joe hated the mate with all his miserable heart, but he was also afraid of him. He faced him now like a cornered rat.

"All right," Copeland growled. "What do you know about it?"

"Nothing."

The mate glanced closely at the dried blood, and then at the Portuguese. "This stuff has been here since before midnight. It was your watch from eight to twelve, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you asleep on the job?"

The cowed man was afraid to tell the truth. "No, sir," he replied.

"Then you know something about it. If you're afraid to tell, you must have had something to do with it."

"No, no!" the Portuguese screamed. "I was asleep!"

"Asleep!" Copeland scoffed. "You just swore you were awake. If you'd lie about one thing, you'd lie about another."

"I believe he would," the captain interrupted, "and a man who would lie would murder."

It was foolish logic, but no more than the men expected of him. It enraged Matson to see the blame placed on the innocent Portuguese, but he felt that it was not the time to interfere.

"He has already drawn a knife at you, hasn't he?"—the captain turned to Copeland.

"Yes, and he darn near got me."

"Then I've had proof enough. Lock him up in the galley and let him do the cookin'. It will be a good place for him to think it over. When we get to Honolulu, we'll turn him over to the police."

The Portuguese sprang at the captain in a rage, but the mate was watching, and sent him sprawling with a back-hand blow on the mouth. Before he could stagger to his feet, the bully had him by the back of the neck and was dragging him off to the galley.

"You think Joe, he kill him?" one of the Kanakas inquired of Davis.

"No," the seaman answered; "I know he didn't."

"I think so, too, he no do it," the Kanaka shook his head.

MATSON stayed away from the wreck that night. He could think of nowhere to search that had not already been investigated by the dead cook. Then, too, the three nights without sleep had begun to tell on his strength.

The Portuguese cursed and raved in the confines of his prison. The men tried to console him when they went for their food, but he was frightened and enraged beyond reason. He refused to cook at first, but Copeland's threat to hang him on the spot put an end to that.

The wrecked barque was only a small vessel, and by the end of the fifth day the cargo had all been moved. She was stripped

of every line and fitting, even to the half-spoiled stores in the store-room and the heap of stove wood piled against the galley.

Both gangs worked at this on board the wreck, and Matson took advantage of the opportunity to search in one or two places that had occurred to him. He found nothing, and when the last boat put off for the schooner, and the unlucky barque was left to her fate, he felt satisfied that there was nothing more he could do.

Captain Bartt came to life that last half-hour, and as soon as the boats were on board, and the hatch covers in place, he ordered the anchor up. The trades were blowing steadily and the schooner was got under way without trouble. By the time the chain was stowed and the anchor lashed in place, the reef was a speck in the distance.

The arrangements at the wreck had kept Copeland away from the schooner during the day, and after the murder he was not seen prowling about at night. Matson felt, though, that the return trip to Honolulu would be different. He was sure that the mate would make an attempt of some sort to regain the jade if he still believed it to be the real thing.

The days passed, however, without a word or look, other than the necessary orders, and Matson began to wonder at the delay. The Portuguese ceased his raving the second day and was given more freedom, and when Matson was satisfied that he had returned to his normal senses he watched for a chance to tell him what he knew, and that he would stand by him.

THE opportunity came during the second's watch, the day before they reached Honolulu. The Portuguese was surprised at what he heard, but not appreciative of what it meant, and Matson questioned him closely.

"It is all fix now," Joe explained. "Mr. Copeland going to let me get away."

"Get away!" Matson exclaimed. "You fool, what good will that do you? He'll swear you did it, anyway, and you'll be a hunted man the rest of your life."

"Well, he say I can't prove that I didn't do it, so it is better I get away."

"But I know you didn't do it. I tell you it was him—I saw him do it. He's lettin' you go to save his own hide."

"Maybe they no believe you. How can you prove it was him? You're only a seaman, he's an officer. No, I already make bargain with him, I think better this way."

"Bargain!" Matson snorted. "What kind of a bargain can you make?"

The Portuguese chuckled. "I fool him—damn him. I find some jade, and I tell him it worth lot of money. I make him promise he let me go, and then I give to him."

"Jade!" Matson gasped. "Jade! Where did you find it?"

Joe was startled by Matson's sudden change. "What's the matter? You think that stuff worth money, too?"

"Where did you find it?" Matson insisted.

"Funny thing, that. I find it in piece of wood. One day I build fire with wood from wreck, and one piece rattle inside. I break it open and it full of jade—some gold, too, but not much."

Matson cursed himself for a fool. He had passed the wood pile a dozen times—had even helped to bring it from the barque, but it had never occurred to him to investigate it. "And you've already given him the stuff?" he questioned.

"Sure," Joe laughed. "He bite like fish."

Matson was doing some fast thinking. He knew now why Copeland had not bothered him. He was probably laughing at him up his sleeve. "When is he going to turn you loose?"

The Portuguese shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know; he say when he get to Honolulu."

"Joe, he's lying to you." It was a guess on Matson's part, but he felt that it was fairly close to the truth. "You get him to put you ashore in one of the boats to-night. Don't let him take you into Honolulu or you'll never get away."

"Why you think so?" The Portuguese was easily set to worrying.

"I think so because I know him. Haven't you had dealings enough with him yourself?"

"You think maybe he lie to me, eh? All right, I ask him to-night."

Matson had started the Portuguese thinking, and by the time he was able to talk with Copeland he was half crazy again. The opportunity came towards the end of the first night watch, while the mate was making a round of the deck.

"Mr. Copeland!" Matson heard Joe call him, and he slipped up beside the galley to overhear what was said.

"What do you want?" the mate growled.

"Let me go to-night in one of the boats," Joe whined. "I'll shove it on the rocks when I get ashore and you can tell 'em I drowned."

"Let you take a boat? You're crazy. You're not worth a boat."

"What you do, then?" Joe demanded, fiercely.

"Do? You fool, I'm going to turn you over to the police. What do you think I'm goin' to do?"

"Ah, you lie, eh? You lie! By God, I kill you!"

"Kill! You haven't got the guts!" Copeland scoffed, and turned away.

Matson rounded the corner of the galley and faced him. "You've got a lot to brag about," he sneered. "It takes a good man to kill a poor Chink."

"You again!" Copeland swore. "Well, you won't get away this time." His hand darted to his ever-ready revolver.

Once more Matson found himself facing the mate's gun, and his heart stood still. He was too far away this time to make a grab for it. It seemed an eternity, that second he stood there waiting for the spurt of flame. It did not come. There was a scream, the flash of a murderous knife, and the mate's gun, dropping from his nerveless fingers, fell clattering to the deck.

In a last frenzy the Portuguese threw the knife after Copeland.

The wounded man sprang back with a cry of agony. Again the huge knife flashed, and again there was a scream, though the knife this time cut only the air. Trapped against the rail, the fo'c'stle bulkhead on one side and Matson on the other, Copeland screamed for mercy. "Don't kill me! Don't kill me!" But his plea fell on deaf ears.

Swinging the knife for another blow, the Portuguese sprang at him. There was no thought in his insane mind but rebellion against the lies, the abuse, and the beatings he had suffered.

Copeland had but one way to escape the knife, and he took it. In one leap he cleared the rail, and disappeared in the wash from the bow. In a last frenzy the Portuguese threw the knife after him, and fell sobbing to the deck.

"Man overboard!" Matson shouted, when he had recovered from his horror, and dashed aft.

Davis, who was standing by the wheel, answered the shout and threw the life preserver. It struck within a yard of the bobbing head, and those who watched held their breath, but it drifted astern and disappeared in the darkness untouched.

Captain Bartt peered out of the companionway, and, seeing the men gathered on the poop, came blustering out. "What's the trouble?" he demanded.

Matson told him.

"Shall we put about, sir?" Davis asked.

"Put about?" the captain repeated. "Yes; there may be a chance."

"You say he never even grabbed at the preserver?"

"It nearly went over his head, sir, but he let it go."

"Then he didn't want it, and there ain't any use in our puttin' back. We couldn't get a boat out in an hour, and we couldn't find him if we did. What the deuce did he jump for? Any fool knows better than to jump off a schooner in a wind like this. Good wind, too; bet we're makin' eight knots."

Ingles came to take over the watch, and after a glance at the straining canvas the

captain went below. He bore no more signs of emotion than he had shown over the loss of his chicken. Some of the men had quieted the Portuguese, and Matson decided it was time to tell the captain what he knew of the Chinaman's murder.

Going first to the forepeak, he fished out the package hidden there, and then, with the second's permission, he descended to the captain's cabin.

"What do you want?" the old man answered his knock.

"I thought you ought to know, sir, that your drowned mate was the man who killed the Chink."

"The mate! You're crazy! What are you trying to do?—frame a dead man so you get that Portygee off?"

"No, sir. I saw him do it myself."

"You saw him do it? Well, this is a deuce of a time to be tellin' me about it."

"Yes, sir, but you know how it is. I didn't want to get beat to death before we made port."

"Man, there's never been any man-handling on a ship of mine."

Matson had his own opinions, but he did not argue. "I know it, sir, but just the same I didn't want to take any chances."

"Well, what did you see? I don't like this putting the blame on a dead man, but maybe I ought to know."

Matson told him what he had seen that night on deck.

"Then he killed the heathen in self-defence," the captain declared. "I'd 'a done it myself."

"Maybe so," Matson let him have his way, "but something must have started it. I sort of figured myself that the Chink was after something on the wreck—that the mate caught him and took it away from him."

"What could he have been after?"

"I don't know that, sir. I was thinking we might look through his things and see if he had anything a Chink might want."

"You're thinkin' of opium. You fools have got the idea that every man who owns a boat smuggles opium."

Matson had a good idea of what had paid for the very schooner he was on, but the occasion demanded extreme diplomacy. "No, no," he protested. "I just thought we might save poor Joe from hanging for something he didn't do. I knew you wouldn't want a thing like that to happen."

"Of course I wouldn't. Go ahead and see what you can find, but mind you don't carry off anything."

"I'd rather you came with me," Matson suggested.

"No; I haven't got time to bother. Let me know if you find anything."

Matson crossed to the mate s cabin, glad that the old man could not read his mind. He found the cabin piled high with the personal belongings Copeland had brought from the barque. He was at a loss to know where to start in, but finally decided on the usual hiding-places before going through the boxes and bags.

It was a good guess ; a pair of old boots caught his attention, and he found one of them stuffed with a pair of socks. Below the socks was a dirty rag, and when he opened it an exclamation escaped him. Bracelets, necklaces, and rings, the colour of changing seas, lay before him. The laughing dogs, squirming dragons, and fat old Buddhas were linked together with bands of Chinese gold. There was something more than green glass here, and, removing the rag, he stowed the new find safely beneath his shirt. With this done, he used the rag again to re-wrap the package he had brought from the forepeak, and returned triumphantly to the captain.

The old man glanced at the pieces and gave a snort. "Junk! Green glass! You think a man would kill anybody for that stuff?"

"It's Chink stuff, and I found it hid in his shoe. It looks to me like it might be worth something."

"I know jade, and I tell you this stuff is junk. No tellin' about him, though: maybe the fool didn't know any better."

I guess he didn't; he sure had it put away for safe keeping."

"I'm goin' to have a deuce of a time getting out of this mess. One man murdered and another lost overboard. It's bad business to get a ship talked about."

"You might say it was a fight between the two of 'em," Matson suggested.

The captain glanced at him sharply. "Do you think the Portygee has got sense enough to keep his mouth shut?"

"Poor Joe, he's scared stiff. If he gets a chance to run, you'll never see him again."

"How about you?"

"It's none of my business." Matson shrugged his shoulders. "I saw the devil do the murder, and I saw him drown for it. That squares things as far as I'm concerned, and I think the rest will see it that way."

The captain debated a while, and then nodded his fat head. "Me, too," he declared; "turn the Portygee loose, and tell him that the quicker he disappears, the better."

"Yes, sir," Matson replied. "I thought you'd see it that way. You're a just man." While he talked, he wrapped the doubtful jade again in the dirty rag.

"What are you going to do with that?" the captain demanded.

"Put it back where I found it."

"Throw it overboard. It's no good. The darn stuff's a curse, anyway."

"Yes, sir, I believe you're right," Matson agreed. But, instead of throwing it overboard when he reached the deck, he shoved it into his pocket.

THE next morning, as soon as the schooner had docked, he went straight to Wing Lee's grocery store, and found the old Chinaman sipping tea at his littered desk.

"Ah, you come back!" Wing Lee exclaimed.

"Yes, I'm back," Matson returned, "and here's that junk you wanted."

Wing Lee took the package in his bony hands and tore it open. One look was enough—he leaped from his stool with all the oaths in the Chinese language.

"What's the matter?" Matson demanded.

"Matter! matter That no jade—it's glass!"

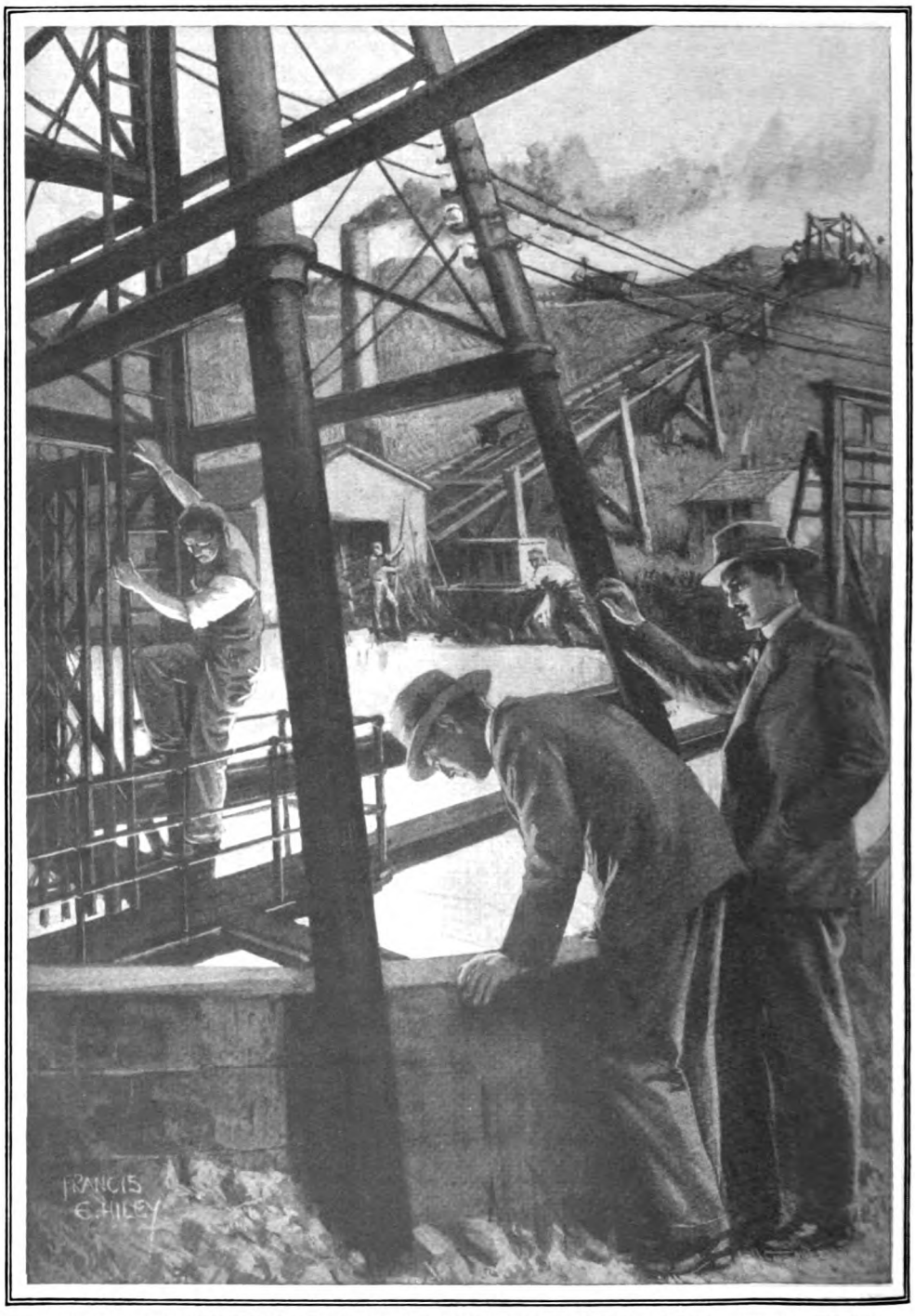
"I thought it was, too," Matson grinned. "I just wanted to make sure. What do you think of this, then?" And he laid another package before the distracted Chinaman.

Wing Lee ripped it frantically open, and sank back with a sigh. The laughing dogs and the fat little Buddhas, with the links of yellow gold, lay in a heap before him. He gazed at them fondly for a long time, and then reached for his wallet. "You are smart man," he said, as he counted out ten one-hundred-dollar bills. "Mr. McDuffy he say you smart man—Wing Lee, he say so, too."

Matson folded the bills and placed them in his pocket. The sum would make him McDuffy's star boarder for a year. "I've been a fool, if you should ask me," he said. "I wouldn't do that job again for ten thousand."

"You no have to." Wing Lee shook his head. "There no other jade like this in all of China."

APRIL, 1928.



THE PIN-POINT OF LIGHT CAME LARGER AND LARGER, UNTIL IT FLOODED THE TUBE WITH ITS SILVERY RADIANCE.

(See page 324.)

A NEW "CHALLENGER" STORY

When the World Screamed

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

I HAD a vague recollection of having heard my friend Edward Malone, of the *Gazette*, speak of Professor Challenger, with whom he had been associated in some remarkable adventures. I am so busy, however, with my own profession, and my firm has been so overtaxed with orders, that I know little of what is going on in the world outside my own special interests. My general recollection was that Challenger had been depicted as a wild genius of a violent and intolerant disposition. I was greatly surprised to receive a business communication from him which was in the following terms:—

"14 (*Bis*), *Enmore Gardens,*
Kensington.

"*Sir,*—

"*I have occasion to engage the services of an expert in Artesian borings. I will not conceal from you that my opinion of experts is not a high one, and that I have usually found that a man who, like myself, has a well-equipped brain can take a sounder and broader view than the man who professes a special knowledge (which, alas, is so often a mere profession), and is therefore limited in his outlook. None the less, I am disposed to give you a trial. Looking down the list of Artesian authorities, a certain oddity—I had almost written absurdity—in your name attracted my attention, and I found upon inquiry that my young friend, Mr. Edward Malone, was actually acquainted with you. I am therefore writing to say that I should be glad to have an interview with you, and that if you satisfy my requirements, and my standard is no mean one, I may be inclined to put a most important matter into your hands. I can say no more at present as the matter is one of extreme secrecy, which can only be discussed by word of mouth. I beg, therefore, that you will at once cancel any engagement which you may happen to have, and that you will call upon me at the above address at 10.30 in the morning of next Friday. There is a scraper as well as a mat, and Mrs. Challenger is most particular.*

"*I remain, Sir, as I began,*
"GEORGE EDWARD CHALLENGER."

I handed this letter to my chief clerk to answer, and he informed the Professor that Mr. Peerless Jones would be glad to keep the appointment as arranged. It was a perfectly civil business note, but it began with the phrase: "Your letter (undated) has been received." This drew a second epistle from the Professor:—

"*Sir,*" he said—and his writing looked like a barbed wire fence—"*I observe that you animadvert upon the trifle that my letter was undated. Might I draw your attention to the fact that, as some return for a monstrous taxation, our Government is in the habit of affixing a small circular sign or stamp upon the outside of the envelope which notifies the date of posting? Should this sign be missing*

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or illegible your remedy lies with the proper postal authorities. Meanwhile, I would ask you to confine your observations to matters which concern the business over which I consult you, and to cease to comment upon the form which my own letters may assume."

It was clear to me that I was dealing with a lunatic, so I thought it well before I went any further in the matter to call upon my friend Malone, whom I had known since the old days when we both played Rugger for Richmond. I found him the same jolly Irishman as ever, and much amused at my first brush with Challenger.

"That's nothing, my boy," said he. "You'll feel as if you had been skinned alive when you have been with him five minutes. He beats the world for offensiveness."

"But why should the world put up with it?"

"They don't. If you collected all the libel actions and all the rows and all the police-court assaults——"

"Assaults!"

"Bless you, he would think nothing of throwing you downstairs if you have a disagreement. He is a primitive cave-man in a lounge suit. I can see him with a club in one hand and a jagged bit of flint in the other. Some people are born out of their proper century, but he is born out of his millennium. He belongs to the early neolithic or thereabouts."

"And he a professor!"

"There is the wonder of it! It's the greatest brain in Europe, with a driving force behind it that can turn all his dreams into facts. They do all they can to hold him back, for his colleagues hate him like poison, but a lot of trawlers might as well hold back the *Berengaria*. He simply ignores them and steams on his way."

"Well," said I, "one thing is clear. I don't want to have anything to do with him. I'll cancel that appointment."

"Not a bit of it. You will keep it to the minute—and mind that it *is* to the minute or you will hear of it."

"Why should I?"

"Well, I'll tell you. First of all, don't take too seriously what I have said about old Challenger. Everyone who gets close to him learns to love him. There is no real harm in the old bear. Why, I remember how he carried an Indian baby with the smallpox on his back for a hundred miles from the back country down to the Madeira river. He is big every way. He won't hurt you if you get right with him."

"I won't give him the chance."

"You will be a fool if you don't. Have you ever heard of the Hengist Down Mystery—the shaft-sinking on the South Coast?"

"Some secret coal-mining exploration, I understand."

Malone winked.

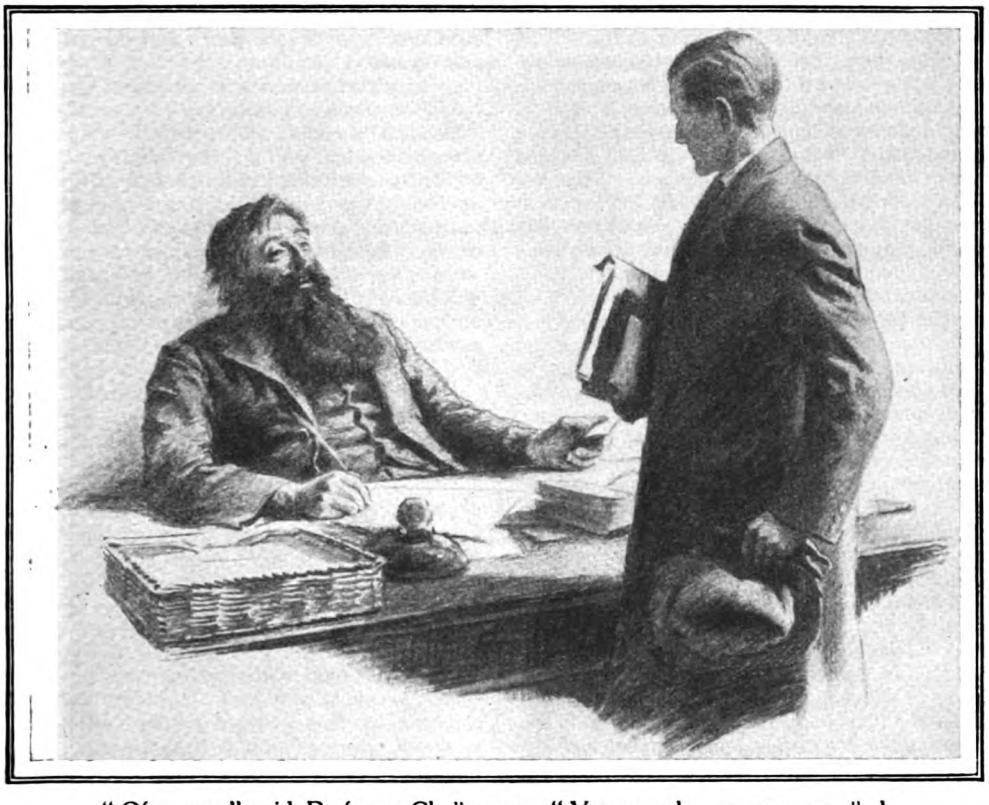
"Well, you can put it down as that if you like. You see, I am in the old man's confidence, and I can't say anything until he gives the word. But I may tell you this, for it has been in the Press. A man, Betterton, who made his money in rubber, left his whole estate to Challenger some years ago, with the provision that it should be used in the interests of science. It proved to be an enormous sum—several millions. Challenger then bought a property at Hengist Down, in Sussex. It was worthless land on the north edge of the chalk country, and he got a large tract of it, which he wired off. There was a deep gully in the middle of it. Here he began to make an excavation. He announced"—here Malone winked again—"that there was petroleum in England, and that he meant to prove it. He built a little model village with a colony of well-paid workers who are all sworn to keep their mouths shut. The gully is wired off as well as the estate, and the place is guarded by bloodhounds. Several pressmen have nearly lost their lives, to say nothing of the seats of their trousers, from these creatures. It's a big operation, and Sir Thomas Morden's firm has it in hand, but they also are sworn to secrecy. Clearly the time has come when Artesian help is needed. Now, would you not be foolish to refuse such a job as that, with all the interest and experience and a big fat cheque at the end of it—to say nothing of rubbing shoulders with the most wonderful man you have ever met or are ever likely to meet?"

MALONE'S arguments prevailed, and Friday morning found me on my way to Enmore Gardens. I took such particular care to be in time that I found myself at the door twenty minutes too soon. I was waiting in the street when it struck me that I recognized the Rolls-Royce with the silver arrow mascot at the door. It was certainly that of Jack Devonshire, the junior partner of the great Morden firm. I had always known him as the most urbane of men, so that it was rather a shock to me when he suddenly appeared, and standing outside the door he raised both his hands to heaven and said with great fervour: "Damn him! Oh, damn him!"

"What is up, Jack? You seem peeved this morning."

"Hullo, Peerless! Are you in on this job, too?"

"There seems a chance of it."



"Of course," said Professor Challenger. "You are the expert—so-called. Mr. Jones—Mr. Peerless Jones."

"Well, you will find it chastening to the temper."

"Rather more so than yours can stand, apparently."

"Well, I should say so. The butler's message to me was: 'The Professor desired me to say, sir, that he was rather busy at present eating an egg, and that if you would call at some more convenient time he would very likely see you.' That was the message delivered by a servant. I may add that I had called to collect forty-two thousand pounds that he owes us."

I whistled.

"You can't get your money?"

"Oh, yes, he is all right about money. I'll do the old gorilla the justice to say that he is open-handed with money. But he pays when he likes and how he likes, and he cares for nobody. However, you go and try your luck and see how you like it." With that he flung himself into his motor and was off.

I waited with occasional glances at my watch until the zero hour should arrive. I am, if I may say so, a fairly hefty individual, and a runner-up for the Belsize Boxing Club middle-weights, but I have never faced an interview with such trepidation as this. It was not physical, for I was confident I could hold my own if this inspired lunatic should attack me, but it was a mixture of feelings in which fear of some public scandal and dread of losing a lucrative contract were mingled. However, things are always easier when imagination ceases and action begins. I snapped up my watch and made for the door.

It was opened by an old wooden-faced butler, a man who bore an expression, or an absence of expression, which gave the impression that he was so inured to shocks that nothing on earth would surprise him.

"By appointment, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly."

He glanced at a list in his hand.

"Your name, sir? . . . Quite so, Mr. Peerless Jones. . . . Ten-thirty. Everything is in order. We have to be careful, Mr. Jones, for we are much annoyed by journalists. The Professor, as you may be aware, does not approve of the Press. This way, sir. Professor Challenger is now receiving."

The next instant I found myself in the

presence. I believe that my friend, Ted Malone, has described the man in his "Lost World" yarn better than I can hope to do, so I'll leave it at that. All I was aware of was a huge trunk of a man behind a mahogany desk, with a great spade-shaped black beard and two large grey eyes half covered with insolent drooping eyelids. His big head sloped back, his beard bristled forward, and his whole appearance conveyed one single impression of arrogant intolerance. "Well, what the devil do *you* want?" was written all over him. I laid my card on the table.

"Ah, yes," he said, picking it up and handling it as if he disliked the smell of it. "Of course. You are the expert—so-called. Mr. Jones—Mr. Peerless Jones. You may thank your godfather, Mr. Jones, for it was this ludicrous prefix which first drew my attention to you."

"I am here, Professor Challenger, for a business interview and not to discuss my own name," said I, with all the dignity I could master.

"Dear me, you seem to be a very touchy person, Mr. Jones. Your nerves are in a highly irritable condition. We must walk warily in dealing with you, Mr. Jones. Pray sit down and compose yourself. I have been reading your little brochure upon the reclaiming of the Sinai Peninsula. Did you write it yourself?"

"Naturally, sir. My name is on it."

"Quite so! Quite so! But it does not always follow, does it? However, I am prepared to accept your assertion. The book is not without merit of a sort. Beneath the dullness of the diction one gets glimpses of an occasional idea. There are germs of thought here and there. Are you a married man?"

"No, sir. I am not."

"Then there is some chance of your keeping a secret."

"If I promise to do so I would certainly keep my promise."

"So you say. My young friend, Malone"—he spoke as if Ted were ten years of age—"has a good opinion of you. He says that I may trust you. This trust is a very great one, for I am engaged just now in one of the greatest experiments—I may even say *the* greatest experiment—in the history of the world. I ask for your participation."

"I shall be honoured."

"It is indeed an honour. I will admit that I should have shared my labours with no one were it not that the gigantic nature of the undertaking calls for the highest technical skill. Now, Mr. Jones, having obtained your promise of inviolable secrecy, I come down to the essential point. It is this—that the world upon which we live is itself a living organism, endowed, as I believe, with a circulation, a respiration, and a nervous system of its own."

Clearly the man was a lunatic.

"Your brain, I observe," he continued, "fails to register. But it will gradually absorb the idea. You will recall how a moor or heath resembles the hairy side of a giant animal. A certain analogy runs through all nature. You will then consider the secular rise and fall of land, which indicates the slow respiration of the creature. Finally, you will note the fidgetings and scratchings which appear to our Lilliputian perceptions as earthquakes and convulsions."

"What about volcanoes?" I asked.

"Tut, tut! They correspond to the heat spots upon our own bodies."

My brain whirled as I tried to find some answer to these monstrous contentions.

"The temperature!" I cried. "Is it not a fact that it rises rapidly as one descends, and that the centre of the earth is liquid heat?"

He waved my assertion aside.

"You are probably aware, sir, since council schools are now compulsory, that the earth is flattened at the poles. This means that the pole is nearer to the centre than any other point and would therefore be most affected by this heat of which you spoke. It is notorious, of course, that the conditions of the poles are tropical, is it not?"

"The whole idea is utterly new to me."

"Of course it is. It is the privilege of the original thinker to put forward ideas which are new and usually unwelcome to the common clay. Now, sir, what is this?" He held up a small object which he had picked from the table.

"I should say it is a sea-urchin."

"Exactly!" he cried, with an air of exaggerated surprise, as when an infant has done something clever. "It is a sea-urchin—a common echinus. Nature repeats itself in many forms regardless of the size. This echinus is a model, a prototype, of the world. You perceive that it is roughly circular, but flattened at the poles. Let us then regard the world as a huge echinus. What are your objections?"

MY chief objection was that the thing was too absurd for argument, but I did not dare to say so. I fished around for some less sweeping assertion.

"A living creature needs food," I said. "Where could the world sustain its huge bulk?"

"An excellent point—excellent!" said the Professor, with a huge air of patronage. "You have a quick eye for the obvious, though you are slow in realizing the more subtle implications. How does the world

get nourishment? Again we turn to our little friend, the echinus. The water which surrounds it flows through the tubes of this small creature and provides its nutrition."

"Then you think that the water——"

"No, sir. The ether. The earth browses upon a circular path in the fields of space, and as it moves the ether is continually pouring through it and providing its vitality. Quite a flock of other little world-echini are doing the same thing; Venus, Mars, and the rest, each with its own field for grazing."

The man was clearly mad, but there was no arguing with him. He accepted my silence as agreement and smiled at me in most beneficent fashion.

"We are coming on, I perceive," said he. "Light is beginning to break in. A little dazzling at first, no doubt, but we will soon get used to it. Pray give me your attention while I found one or two more observations upon this little creature in my hand.

"We will suppose that on this outer hard rind there were certain infinitely small insects which crawled upon the surface. Would the echinus ever be aware of their existence?"

"I should say not."

"You can well imagine, then, that the earth has not the least idea of the way in which it is utilized by the human race. It is quite unaware of this fungus growth of vegetation and evolution of tiny animalcules which has collected upon it during its travels round the sun as barnacles gather upon the ancient vessel. That is the present state of affairs, and that is what I propose to alter."

I STARED in amazement. "You propose to alter it?"

"I propose to let the earth know that there is at least one person, George Edward Challenger, who calls for attention—who, indeed, insists upon attention. It is certainly the first intimation it has ever had of the sort."

"And how, sir, will you do this?"

"Ah, there we get down to business. You have touched the spot. I will again call your attention to this interesting little creature which I hold in my hand. It is all nerves and sensibility beneath that protective crust. Is it not evident that if a parasitic animalcule desired to call its attention it would sink a hole in its shell and so stimulate its sensory apparatus?"

"Certainly."

"Or, again, we will take the case of the homely flea or a mosquito which explores the surface of the human body. We may be unaware of its presence. But presently, when it sinks its proboscis through the skin, which is our crust, we are disagreeably reminded that we are not altogether alone. My plans now will no doubt begin to dawn upon you. Light breaks in the darkness."

"Good heavens! You propose to sink a shaft through the earth's crust?"

He closed his eyes with ineffable complacency.

"You see before you," he said, "the first who will ever pierce that horny hide. I may even put it in the present tense and say who *has* pierced it."

"You have done it!"

"With the very efficient aid of Morden and Co., I think I may say that I have done it. Several years of constant work which has been carried on night and day, and conducted by every known species of drill, borer, crusher, and explosive, has at last brought us to our goal."

"You don't mean to say you are through the crust!"

"If your expressions denote bewilderment they may pass. If they denote incredulity——"

"No, sir, nothing of the kind."

"You will accept my statement without question. We are through the crust. It was exactly fourteen thousand four hundred and forty-two yards thick, or roughly eight miles. In the course of our sinking it may interest you to know that we have exposed a fortune in the matter of coal-beds which would probably in the long run defray the cost of the enterprise. Our chief difficulty has been the springs of water in the lower chalk and Hastings sands, but these we have overcome. The last stage has now been reached—and the last stage is none other than Mr. Peerless Jones. You, sir, represent the mosquito. Your Artesian borer takes the place of the stinging proboscis. The brain has done its work. Exit the thinker. Enter the mechanical one, the peerless one, with his rod of metal. Do I make myself clear?"

"You talk of eight miles!" I cried. "Are you aware, sir, that five thousand feet is considered nearly the limit for Artesian borings? I am acquainted with one in Upper Silesia which is six thousand two hundred feet deep, but it is looked upon as a wonder."

"You misunderstand me, Mr. Peerless. Either my explanation or your brain is at fault, and I will not insist upon which. I am well aware of the limits of Artesian borings, and it is not likely that I would have spent millions of pounds upon my colossal tunnel if a six-inch boring would have met my needs. All that I ask you is to have a drill ready which shall be as sharp as possible, not more than a hundred feet in length, and operated by an electric motor.

An ordinary percussion drill driven home by a weight will meet every requirement."

"Why by an electric motor?"

"I am here, Mr. Jones, to give orders, not reasons. Before we finish it may happen—it *may*, I say, happen—that your very life may depend upon this drill being started from a distance by electricity. It can, I presume, be done?"

"Certainly it can be done."

"Then prepare to do it. The matter is not yet ready for your actual presence, but your preparations may now be made. I have nothing more to say."

"But it is essential," I expostulated, "that you should let me know what soil the drill is to penetrate. Sand, or clay, or chalk would each need different treatment."

"Let us say jelly," said Challenger. "Yes, we will for the present suppose that you have to sink your drill into jelly. And now, Mr. Jones, I have matters of some importance to engage my mind, so I will wish you good morning. You can draw up a formal contract with mention of your charges for my Head of Works."

I bowed and turned, but before I reached the door my curiosity overcame me. He was already writing furiously with a quill pen screeching over the paper, and he looked up angrily at my interruption.

"Well, sir, what now? I had hoped you were gone.'

"I only wished to ask you, sir, what the object of so extraordinary an experiment can be?"

"Away, sir, away!" he cried, angrily. "Raise your mind above the base mercantile and utilitarian needs of commerce. Shake off your paltry standards of business. Science seeks knowledge. Let the knowledge lead us where it will, we still must seek it. To know once for all what we are, why we are, where we are, is that not in itself the greatest of all human aspirations? Away, sir, away!"

His great black head was bowed over his papers once more and blended with his beard. The quill pen screeched more shrilly than ever. So I left him, this extraordinary man, with my head in a whirl at the thought of the strange business in which I now found myself to be his partner.

When I got back to my office I found Ted Malone waiting with a broad grin upon his face to know the result of my interview.

"The most aggravating, insolent, intolerant, self-opinionated man I have ever met, but——"

"Exactly!" cried Malone. "We all come to that 'but.'"

"Well!" he cried. "None the worse? No case of assault and battery? You must have handled him very tactfully. What do you think of the old boy?"

"The most aggravating, insolent, intolerant, self-opinionated man I have ever met, but——"

"Exactly!" cried Malone. "We all come to that 'but.' Of course, he is all you say and a lot more, but one feels that so big a man is not to be measured in our scale, and that we can endure from him what we would not stand from any other living mortal. Is that not so?"

"Well, I don't know him well enough yet to say, but I will admit that if he is not a mere bullying megalomaniac, and if what he says is true, then he certainly is in a class by himself. But *is* it true?"

"Of course it is true. Challenger always delivers the goods. Now, where are you exactly in the matter? Has he told you about Hengist Down?"

"Yes, in a sketchy sort of way."

"Well, you may take it from me that the whole thing is colossal—colossal in conception and colossal in execution. He hates pressmen, but I am in his confidence, for he knows that I will publish no more than he authorizes. Therefore I have his plans, or some of his plans. He is such a deep old bird that one never is sure if one has really touched bottom. Anyhow, I know enough to assure you that Hengist Down is a practical proposition and nearly completed. My advice to you now is simply to wait events, and meanwhile to get your gear all ready. You'll hear soon enough either from him or from me."

AS it happened, it was from Malone himself that I heard. He came round quite early to my office some weeks later, as the bearer of a message.

"I've come from Challenger," said he.

"You are like the pilot fish to the shark."

"I'm proud to be anything to him. He really is a wonder. He has done it all right. It's your turn now, and then he is ready to ring up the curtain."

"Well, I can't believe it till I see it, but I have everything ready and loaded on a lorry. I could start it off at any moment."

"Then do so at once. I've given you a tremendous character for energy and punctuality, so mind you don't let me down. In the meantime, come down with me by rail and I will give you an idea of what has to be done."

It was a lovely spring morning—May 22nd, to be exact—when we made that fateful journey which brought me on to a stage which is destined to be historical. On the way Malone handed me a note from Challenger which I was to accept as my instructions.

"*Sir,*" (it ran)—

"*Upon arriving at Hengist Down you will put yourself at the disposal of Mr. Barforth, the Chief Engineer, who is in possession of my plans. My young friend, Malone, the bearer of this, is also in touch with me and may protect me from any personal contact. We have now experienced certain phenomena in the shaft at and below the fourteen thousand-foot level which fully bear out my views as to the nature of a planetary body, but some more sensational proof is needed before I can hope to make an impression upon the torpid intelligence of the modern scientific world. That proof you are destined to afford, and they to witness. As you descend in the lifts you will observe, presuming that you have the rare quality of observation, that you pass in succession the secondary chalk beds, the coal measures, some Devonian and Cambrian indications, and finally the granite, through which the greater part of our tunnel is conducted. The bottom is now covered with tarpaulin, which I order you not to tamper with, as any clumsy handling of the sensitive inner cuticle of the earth might bring about premature results. At my instruction, two strong beams have been laid across the shaft twenty feet above the bottom, with a space between them. This space will act as a clip to hold up your Artesian tube. Fifty feet of drill will suffice, twenty of which will project below the beams, so that the point of the drill comes nearly down to the tarpaulin. As you value your life do not let it go further. Thirty feet will then project upwards in the shaft, and when you have released it we may assume that not less than forty feet of drill will bury itself in the earth's substance. As this substance is very soft I find that you will probably need no driving power, and that simply a release of the tube will suffice by its own weight to drive it into the layer which we have uncovered. These instructions would seem to be sufficient for any ordinary intelligence, but I have little doubt that you will need more, which can be referred to me through our young friend, Malone.*

"GEORGE EDWARD CHALLENGER."

It can be imagined that when we arrived at the station of Storrington, near the northern foot of the South Downs, I was in a state of considerable nervous tension. A weather-worn Vauxhall thirty landaulette was awaiting us, and bumped us for six or seven miles over by-paths and lanes which, in spite of their natural seclusion, were deeply rutted and showed every sign of heavy traffic. A broken lorry lying in the grass at one point showed that others had

found it rough going as well as we. Once a huge piece of machinery which seemed to be the valves and piston of a hydraulic pump projected itself, all rusted, from a clump of furze.

"That's Challenger's doing," said Malone, grinning. "Said it was one-tenth of an inch out of estimate, so he simply chucked it by the wayside."

"With a lawsuit to follow, no doubt."

"A lawsuit! My dear chap, we should have a court of our own. We have enough to keep a judge busy for a year. Government, too. The old devil cares for no one. Rex *v.* George Challenger and George Challenger *v.* Rex. A nice devil's dance the two will have from one court to another. Well, here we are. All right, Jenkins, you can let us in!"

A huge man with a notable cauliflower ear was peering into the car, a scowl of suspicion upon his face. He relaxed and saluted as he recognized my companion.

"All right, Mr. Malone. I thought it was the American Associated Press."

"Oh, they are on the track, are they?"

"They to-day, and *The Times* yesterday. Oh, they are buzzing round proper. Look at that!" He indicated a distant dot upon the sky-line. "See that glint! That's the telescope of the Chicago *Daily News*. Yes, they are fair after us now. I've seen 'em in rows, same as the crows, along the Beacon yonder."

"Poor old Press gang!" said Malone, as we entered a gate in a formidable barbed wire fence. "I am one of them myself, and I know how it feels."

At this moment we heard a plaintive bleat behind us of "Malone! Ted Malone!" It came from a fat little man who had just arrived upon a motor-bike and was at present struggling in the Herculean grasp of the gate-keeper.

"Here, let me go!" he sputtered. "Keep your hands off! Malone, call off this gorilla of yours."

"Here, let me go!" he sputtered. "Malone, call off this gorilla of yours."

"Let him go, Jenkins! He's a friend of mine!" cried Malone. "Well, old bean, what is it? What are you after in these parts? Fleet Street is your stamping ground—not the wilds of Sussex."

"You know what I am after perfectly well," said our visitor. "I've got the assignment to write a story about Hengist Down and I can't go home without the copy."

"Sorry, Roy, but you can't get anything

here. You'll have to stay on that side of the wire. If you want more you must go and see Professor Challenger and get his leave."

"I've been," said the journalist, ruefully. "I went this morning."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said he would put me through the window."

Malone laughed.

"And what did you say?"

"I said, 'What's wrong with the door?' and I skipped through it just to show there was nothing wrong with it. It was no time for argument. I just went. What with that bearded Assyrian bull in London, and this Thug down here, who has ruined my clean celluloid, you seem to be keeping queer company, Ted Malone."

"I can't help you, Roy; I would if I could. They say in Fleet Street that you have never been beaten, but you are up against it this time. Get back to the office, and if you just wait a few days I'll give you the news as soon as the old man allows."

"No chance of getting in?"

"Not an earthly."

"Money no object?"

"You should know better than to say that."

"They tell me it's a short cut to New Zealand."

"It will be a short cut to the hospital if you butt in here, Roy. Good-bye, now. We have some work to do of our own.

"That's Roy Perkins, the war correspondent," said Malone as we walked across the compound. "We've broken his record, for he is supposed to be undefeatable. It's his fat little innocent face that carries him through everything. We were on the same staff once. Now there"—he pointed to a cluster of pleasant red-roofed bungalows—"are the quarters of the men. They are a splendid lot of picked workers who are paid far above ordinary rates. They have to be bachelors and teetotallers, and under oath of secrecy. I don't think there has been any leakage up to now. That field is their football ground and the detached house is their library and recreation room. The old man is some organizer, I can assure you. This is Mr. Barforth, the head engineer-in-charge."

A long, thin, melancholy man with deep lines of anxiety upon his face had appeared before us.

"I expect you are the Artesian engineer," said he, in a gloomy voice. "I was told to expect you. I am glad you've come, for I don't mind telling you that the responsibility of this thing is getting on my nerves. We work away, and I never know if it's a gush of chalk water, or a seam of coal, or a squirt of petroleum, or maybe a touch of hell fire that is coming next. We've been spared the last up to now, but you may make the connection for all I know."

"Is it so hot down there?"

"Well, it's hot. There's no denying it. And yet maybe it is not hotter than the barometric pressure and the confined space might account for. Of course, the ventilation is awful. We pump the air down, but two-hour shifts are the most the men can do—and they are willing lads too. The Professor was down yesterday, and he was

very pleased with it all. You had best join us at lunch, and then you will see it for yourself."

AFTER a hurried and frugal meal we were introduced with loving assiduity upon the part of the manager to the contents of his engine-house, and to the miscellaneous scrap-heap of disused implements with which the grass was littered. On one side was a huge dismantled Arrol hydraulic shovel, with which the first excavations had been rapidly made. Beside it was a great engine which worked a continuous steel rope on which the skips were fastened which drew up the *débris* by successive stages from the bottom of the shaft. In the power-house were several Escher Wyss turbines of great horse-power running at one hundred and forty revolutions a minute and governing hydraulic accumulators which evolved a pressure of fourteen hundred pounds per square inch, passing in three-inch pipes down the shaft and operating four rock drills with hollow cutters of the Brandt type. Abutting upon the engine-house was the electric house supplying power for a very large lighting instalment, and next to that again was an extra turbine of two hundred horse-power, which drove a ten-foot fan forcing air down a twelve-inch pipe to the bottom of the workings. All these wonders were shown with many technical explanations by their proud operator, who was well on his way to boring me stiff, as I may in turn have done my reader. There came a welcome interruption, however, when I heard the roar of wheels and rejoiced to see my Leyland three-tonner come rolling and heaving over the grass, heaped up with my tools and sections of tubing, and bearing my foreman, Peters, and a very grimy assistant in front. The two of them set to work at once to unload my stuff and to carry it in. Leaving them at their work, the manager, with Malone and myself, approached the shaft.

It was a wondrous place, on a very much larger scale than I had imagined. The spoil banks, which represented the thousands of tons removed, had been built up into a great horseshoe around it, which now made a considerable hill. In the concavity of this horseshoe, composed of chalk, clay, coal, and granite, there rose up a bristle of iron pillars and wheels from which the pumps and the lifts were operated. They connected with the brick power building which filled up the gap in the horseshoe. Beyond it lay the open mouth of the shaft, a huge yawning pit, some thirty or forty feet in diameter, lined and topped with brick and cement. As I craned my neck over the side and gazed down into the dreadful abyss, which I had been assured was eight miles deep, my brain reeled at the thought of what it represented. The sunlight struck the mouth of it diagonally, and I could only see some hundreds of yards of dirty white chalk, bricked here and there where the surface had seemed unstable. Even as I looked, however, I saw, far, far down in the darkness, a tiny speck of light, the smallest possible dot, but clear and steady against the inky background.

"What is that light?" I asked.

Malone bent over the parapet beside me.

"That's one of the cages coming up," said he. "Rather wonderful, is it not? That is a mile or more from us, and that little gleam is a powerful arc lamp. It travels quickly, and will be here in a few minutes."

Sure enough the pin-point of light came larger and larger, until it flooded the tube with its silvery radiance, and I had to turn away my eyes from its blinding glare. A moment later the iron cage clashed up to the landing stage, and four men crawled out of it and passed on to the entrance.

"Nearly all in," said Malone. "It is no joke to do a two-hour shift at that depth. Well, some of your stuff is ready to hand here. I suppose the best thing we can do is to go down. Then you will be able to judge the situation for yourself."

(*To be concluded.*)

NEXT MONTH:

"Love-Letters,"

By W. W. JACOBS

The NIGHT-WATCHMAN at his best

Miss Amagee "Sells a Pup"

BY

EDGAR and MARGARET JEPSON

Illustrated by
S. TRESILIAN

"KINDA lonely, ain't it?" said Mr. Amagee, and on his face rested the resignation of the world-wanderer whom no new scene can excite or thrill.

"Sure, Pop," said Miss Amagee.

Copyrignt, 1928, by Edgar Jepson.

Her eyes, which had been gazing straight before her, picking out the smoothest going over the rough ground, rose and swept the vast plain covered with grass and low bush, which rose in the far distance into a half-circle of blue hills. Though she could undoubtedly see a long way, there was nothing in sight but the beauties of Nature, and she had seen Nature more beautiful, though the wind swept the grass on the undulating land into lovely running waves of grey and green.

Her eyes fell back on the rough trail, and they marched on steadily through an immensity that dwarfed them, hardly seeming to move; the blue hills in front drew no nearer; the blue hills behind did not retreat.

They marched in a patient silence, though the three native porters, who carried their light tents and baggage, mumbled and grunted and clicked behind them without ceasing.

It must have been a good half-hour later that Mr. Amagee broke the silence. "Seems as though them mount'ns might be a mirage," he said, gazing ahead at what looked to be a line of tall smoke-wreaths beyond the blue hills.

"Sure, Pop," said Miss Amagee.

She wore riding-breeches, mosquito boots, a cotton shirt, and soft, wide-brimmed hat. Her face was set in the same unexpectant patience as that of her father; it was plain that the immensity through which they had journeyed did not impress her. But it was a patience that did not sit on her face so well, for it presented the strongest contrast to that of her father. Her sombre blue eyes, of the blue of a thrush's egg, against her clear, tanned skin, so astonishingly full of light, her lips so red against that brown, the easy swing of her slender figure over that rough ground with the heavy rifle on her shoulder, gave an almost startling impression of vitality. Beside her, with his lined and battered face and faded eyes and slouching gait, her father looked almost enervated. But it was a vitality for the time being suppressed: there was no expectation, no admiration or wonder in her face; she wore the air of one who has marched through immense plains before, many immense plains.

They marched steadily on for an hour through the increasing heat. Mr. Amagee seemed to find his pack heavy, for he kept shifting it a little; he remembered that he was not so young as he had been. The beautiful line of Miss Amagee's jaw seemed to grow more defined; her lips grew thinner as they set more firmly; she reminded herself that she had known hotter suns in unhealthier countries.

It was an hour later when Mr. Amagee sighted the landmark for which he was looking, five thorn trees in a row on the top of a rise. He took a new compass bearing and turned twenty-five degrees south. Half an hour later, coming to the crest of another rise, they saw the town of Potter's Drift lying below them. On the map it is quite a large town; on the plain it was small—a single store of European build, surrounded by a score or so of round thatched native huts. Though it had stood there for ten years or more, it wore an air of impermanence, as though a giant, playing with toy buildings, had dropped them in the dip overnight.

"Some city!" said Mr. Amagee, mournfully, and he moved on down the slope.

THE store was the store of Central Africa. Kept by a German with an Italian wife, it was sparsely stocked, and for the most part with the provisions left behind by the luxurious hunting-party of a millionaire big-game hunter who had shot lions there some years before: tins of all kinds of food from bully-beef to asparagus all with yellow, insect-eaten labels.

Mr. Amagee's indifferent eyes wandered over the tins, and he said: "I want a photo-card of this here Lake Victoria Nyanza."

The German store-keeper spoke poor, but voluble, English. Few white men came to his store, and they had wanted many things, but none of them had ever asked for a photo-card. Mr. Amagee explained that he wanted a photograph of Lake Victoria Nyanza on the back of a card that you sent by post.

The store-keeper proved obtuse.

"Don't none of the settlers here ever write home to their mothers?" asked Mr. Amagee, finally.

The store-keeper of a sudden became intelligent. From the bottom of a drawer he took a yellowish post-card. Lake Victoria Nyanza was not an outstanding feature of the picture on the back of it; but he assured Mr. Amagee that it was a local print, and even pointed out a smudge which he declared to be the island of Ukerewe in the distance.

"I'll take your word for it," said Mr. Amagee in resigned accents. "I haven't been there yet, and I'm breaking my rule gittin' this photo-card here. I always go to a place first and get a photo-card after. But as we'll be seeing the lake quite soon, and stores are mighty scarce in those parts, I thought I'd try for one while I could. Ain't there a huntin'-party hereabouts?"

"Yes," said the German. "Sthere vas a safari at Bottar's Gab. Two Englishers out from Nairobi sthey cump there for sthe

shooting—very fine! Ach! Wildebeste, sthey are sthousands! Kiboko and booffalo, and sthe lions sthey have sthe black mane—ja! You shoot them?"

"Black-maned lions?" said Mr. Amagee. "Sure, that's very nice, but it ain't lions I'm out after. Ever hear of a guy called Gupp—Ginger Gupp?"

"*Nein*," said the store-keeper.

"No?" said Mr. Amagee. "Well, I sure do envy you. And this explorer dame, Mrs. Pelter—she's coming up this way, ain't she?"

"She coom shoot mit sthe Englishers," said the store-keeper. "She go from sthe Cape to Cairo in sthe motor-cars."

"All Africa knows that," said Mr. Amagee. "And a very nice way of gettin' about it is. Anything you want, Sally?"

Miss Amagee bought a tin of asparagus and a bag of flour, and they said good-bye.

"Vhere vas you going to?" said the German.

"Khartoum," said Mr. Amagee in the tone of one who says: "Round the corner."

THEY resumed their patient march towards the blue hills. Presently Mr. Amagee said: "I guess, if we're to get to Khartoum in time, we'll have to be pretty quick about it, or Ginger Gupp will be off and half acrost the world again. Now I've got my photo-card, all we got to do is to start."

"Sure, Pop," said Miss Amagee. She paused, and added thoughtfully: "But if we don't pick up a pretty hefty wad of dough, it looks as though we'll have to walk."

"Well, kid, you heard what that Dutchman said. That explorer dame and her flivvers are coming up this way, and unless we're going to foot it, the only transport for us inside of about a thousand miles seems them flivvers. So I say let's go round by Potter's Gap."

"Sure, Pop," said Miss Amagee.

Potter's Gap, on the shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza, south of the Kavirondo Gulf, lying in the middle of a great stretch of bush and sandy veldt, well off the usual safari route, abounds in game and has been very little shot over. Though it was a bare fifteen miles from Potter's Drift, so bad was the going that Mr. and Miss Amagee did not reach it until the afternoon of the next day.

They did not make camp at once, but spent an hour looking round. Then, standing on one of the steep bluffs above the lake, in a round, childish hand Mr. Amagee wrote on the front of his photo-card: "The shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza," and addressed it to his sister at Burket, Ind., who, should it be so fortunate as to reach her, would place it in the trunk which contained his collection, probably the finest collection of out-of-the-way photo-cards in the States. He stuck a British East Africa postage-stamp on it and put it in his wallet to be posted at the first post-town. Then, following the banks of a stream across the open country towards a column of smoke that rose thinly into the clear air, they came to the camp of the hunting-party, two white men and a score of native porters and hunters, and Mr. Amagee introduced his daughter and himself to Dr. Carling Wilson and Colonel Grosvenor.

After chatting for a few minutes and learning by a casual question that this was the safari to which the flivvers of Mrs. Pelter were bending their wheels, he moved on and made camp over a hundred and fifty yards away from them. The sun was setting by the time they were settled, and the swift darkness came down. The fires of the other camp were brilliant through it; but neither Mr. nor Miss Amagee was stirred by that primæval instinct which makes men herd together for mutual protection against the unknown. They were used to the unknown. They sat with their three porters by their own fire in a sanctuary that extended no farther than the circle of its light, round which slunk the jackals, dim shadows.

Mr. Amagee talked fitfully of the advantages of going to Cairo on a flivver. He observed that Khartoum was on the way. He observed also that it was plumb greedy for two people to use two cars and a trailer. Miss Amagee observed that some people had extravagant notions of the things you needed on a journey.

During the next day they saw nothing of the hunting-party; now and again they heard faintly the report of a rifle. The next afternoon the Pelter *cortège* arrived. It had been delayed, as Mrs. Pelter told them volubly, on the way from Kwa Hindi by getting stuck in a bog for a day and a night.

In the evening the Amagees joined the party round the camp fire. Mr. Howard Hunter, the stout, but adventurous, stock-broker who was driving one of Mrs. Pelter's cars for her, looked dirty, weary, and disgusted. The witty, beautiful, and daring Mrs. Pelter, as she was known to the readers of newspapers in the distant capitals of civilization, did her best to live up to her reputation. Certainly she was not bad-looking, though her enemies asserted that she always contrived to look like a superior parlour-maid, and if she was not witty she was now and again facetious. Miss Amagee

knew little of women, especially of ladies who frequent the polite world, but she knew the reactions of men to the wild. And sometimes when the profound hush of the night was broken by the roar of a lion out on the plain, a daunting sound that filled heaven and earth, she saw Mrs. Pelter start a little and cast a quick glance over her shoulder. The men did not see that swift movement of the head and the flutter of the eyelids. But Miss Amagee had seen it before, in men, and she knew it.

She was not attracted by Mrs. Pelter.

Dr. Carling Wilson she liked. He was grey-haired, wizened, and hard-bitten, and he seemed to be in his element. She liked his smile. She had not sat by the fire for ten minutes before she dubbed Colonel Grosvenor "Stiff-faced Stephen." He had high cheek-bones and an arched nose in a thin, dark, and rather pale face; and it seemed to her that his cold grey eyes rested on her with disapproval. She had known many kinds of people in many cities and at the ends of the world, but Mrs. Pelter and Colonel Grosvenor she did not know. She took it that they were the salt of that polite world into which she had never wandered, and her belief was strengthened by the fact that they so plainly shared it with her.

NATURALLY the talk ran on big game, and Mrs. Pelter spoke confidently of getting a lion. Mr. Howard Hunter grew a little restive; he did not like lions. He did not mind shooting impalla or Tommies for the pot, but he did not want to shoot lions. He had seen them often enough, wandering peacefully about quite near the wild herds in the daytime, when they were harmless if you kept out of their way. Even the herds knew that and paid no heed to them. Night is the lions' time. This motoring across Africa was bad enough without lion hunts.

He wished he could say with Mr. Amagee: "I never got a game-licence, and I guess the British Government would be plumb upset if I shot one of their lions without one."

"Five hundred dollars is a lot to pay for a licence," said Miss Amagee.

"There's not much point in getting one unless you're a good shot," said Mrs. Pelter.

"Sure, lady, Sally can shoot all right," said Mr. Amagee, mildly. "You should have seen her get a gazelle through the head at two hundred yards, and him doing forty miles an hour."

"A Tommy, do you mean?" said Colonel Grosvenor. "They certainly run, but they don't run as fast as that, sir."

"This was an Arabian gazelle, up at the Waddy Musa," said Mr. Amagee. "They run faster than a Tommy, a lot. I've never seen anything run faster, except those little American rats—what's their name? Guess I've forgotten. Grey they are. You see them down in Oruro."

The other four looked at Mr. and Miss Amagee with a new interest, and curiosity awoke in their flame-lit faces.

"You've travelled in South America?" said Colonel Grosvenor.

"Why, yes—on and off," said Mr. Amagee.

Night and the inhospitable wilderness drive men into an immediate amity, and by the camp fire they accept one another with little question. Mrs. Pelter had supposed the Amagees to be local people, settlers. She saw Colonel Grosvenor studying Miss Amagee, not with an approving air, but with interest. At once she looked to her own laurels; she began to talk about the magnificent tiger she had shot in India; she had the skin at home in London. It became clear that if Mrs. Pelter had not been a fine shot, at least two people would have met their end instead of the tiger.

"Them tigers are devils," said Mr. Amagee. "Recollect that old brute in Assam that walked into the compound and carried off our boy, Sally?"

"Sure, Pop," said Miss Amagee.

They did not elaborate the story. Mrs. Pelter looked at them with dislike, Dr. Carling Wilson with lively interest, Mr. Hunter gloomily, Colonel Grosvenor with a faint incredulity.

"Bears," said Mr. Amagee, "are worse."

He left it at that. The party round the fire was silent, plainly speculating in what country he had met bears. Colonel Grosvenor had a strong suspicion that it was in no country at all. He broke the silence and began to talk about lions again. He knew that Mrs. Pelter was very keen on getting a lion, for she had come some hundreds of miles out of her way to meet him on his favourite hunting-ground in order to get one.

"I won't leave till I get a lion," said Mrs. Pelter in a tone that boded ill for the lions of Potter's Gap.

"It ought to be fairly easy," said Colonel Grosvenor. "You shall go out to-morrow morning. Better use my boys. They're experienced hunters, M'gomi especially."

"No, no," said Mrs. Pelter, quickly. "Not for at least a couple of days. I'm black and blue all over from jolting along in that perfectly terrible car."

They left it at that, though one would have thought that, having been jolted all the way from Cape Town, she was by now used to it.

"You seem to have had better sport than we have, Miss Amagee," said Dr. Wilson.
"I was shooting for dinner," said Miss Amagee.

On the way home Miss Amagee said: "I guess that tiger was doped and muzzled and hamstrung in four places."

"Sure, kid," said Mr. Amagee.

DR. CARLING WILSON had not taken to Mrs. Pelter. She was a great friend of Grosvenor's, of course, and he liked Grosvenor. But there it was: he did not like her. He was glad she did not come with them when they went out after roan next morning. She gave them the impression that she was burning to snatch up her rifle and dash off over the veldt after lions; but she did not come. They found no roan. On their way back they came upon the Amagees' camp.

Miss Amagee was there alone, sitting under a shelter made of leafy branches by their boys, cleaning her rifle. One of those boys was skinning a kongoni. She greeted them amiably and went on with her cleaning.

"You seem to have had better sport than we have, Miss Amagee," said Dr. Wilson.

"I was shooting for dinner," said Miss Amagee.

Dr. Wilson somewhat mournfully deplored the reluctance of roan to come and be killed. Grosvenor watched Miss Amagee's hands at work, small hands but uncommonly capable; also he wondered, idly, why her eyes, which never seemed to rest on him, were sombre. He did not like her chin; it was too determined, and it was against Nature that any woman should have such a firm mouth. No, she was *not* womanly. But how extraordinarily blue her eyes were against the egg-shell brown of her small face! He gazed at her with cold, disapproving, but unconscious deliberation; and then her eyes did rest on him. Her expression seemed to say that she had seen men like him before, many of them, and that she had had little use for them.

Rather hastily he said: "I can't understand how you get on with so few porters, Miss Amagee. Wilson has seven and I have six, and even so we had most of our outfit dumped by trek-wagon from Nairobi."

He did not wish to say this; he said it under an impulsion to say something. It sounded like bragging.

"Pop and I like to travel light," said Miss Amagee, and the tone in which she said it made his speech sound yet more boastful.

Perhaps it was this that made him say: "I ought to be getting back to camp to talk to M'gomi about those skins."

He walked off, disapproving keenly of Miss Amagee. Dr. Carling Wilson stayed where he was.

"What does he do?" said Miss Amagee, nodding towards his back, when he was out of earshot, and there was a hostile note in her tone.

"Oh, he's rather the big noise, politically, at Cairo, and he's a keen sportsman and a fine shot," said Wilson, rather amused by the clash of temperaments and civilizations he had divined rather than perceived.

"I see," said Miss Amagee. "That's why he goes about the world disapprovin' of people."

She shifted to one side in her shelter and bade him come out of the sun. He sat down beside her, pleased. He was a travelled man, interested in his fellow-creatures, above all in new types. This was a new type. They talked of the country.

Presently she said: "We came to Zanzibar to see a guy called Gupp—Ginger Gupp. Ever heard of him?"

"I don't think I have. What does he do?"

"Most things and most people; nothing good," said Miss Amagee. "He wasn't there, though, when we got to Zanzibar. We found he'd gone on to Khartoum. It's more'n a year ago that a friend wrote to us from Zanzibar to say he was there, and the letter followed us from Bombay round by Teheran, so we only got it four months ago."

"It sounds rather a long way to go to see a man and then find he isn't there," said Dr. Wilson, amused by her casualness.

"Why, yes. But we were in Aden, selling oil shares for a friend, and when we found Ginger wasn't in Zanzibar, Pop thought he'd like to push on and take a look at Lake Victoria Nyanza on the way."

"Aden doesn't sound a good market for oil shares!"

"Oh, sure. But we sell them to all colours, Arabs and niggers and Hindoos and officers from ships all over the world. Everyone's going in for oil nowadays," said Miss Amagee, and added naively: "They were quite good shares, you know. Pop and I hung on to some for ourselves."

"Of course," said Dr. Wilson. "You seem to travel a lot."

"Sure, Pop and I get about a bit," said Miss Amagee.

SHE went on to say that they had done it ever since she could remember, ever since her mother died, when she was a kid in Arkansas. Mr. Amagee could turn his hand to anything, and on that turn of his hand they lived. There was always money to be made in out-of-the-way places. Sometimes it might be a job for a friend; once or twice it had been gold, in India rubies; often it had been real estate. Mr. Amagee had some thousands of dollars put by in a bank in Montreal, but they never touched that. With what they picked up in one place they went on to another.

She had traversed all the continents.

"Pop likes to get about a bit," she said. "Besides, he's looking for Ginger Gupp."

"But why on earth doesn't he write to him and fix a meeting-place?" said Dr. Wilson.

"Well, it's like this. Pop wants to meet up with Ginger Gupp, but Ginger Gupp doesn't want to meet up with Pop." She paused, and added pensively: "I think Pop aims to sink an axe in his head."

"Rather drastic," said Dr. Wilson.

"Pop *is* drastic—sometimes," Miss Amagee admitted.

That night at supper Dr. Wilson talked about the Amagees with interest. He talked, rather over Mrs. Pelter's head, about their Odyssey, and said that Mr. Amagee was the modern Ulysses who had by accident begotten a modern Nausicaa. "The young sapling, you know," he added, speaking to Grosvenor.

Grosvenor nodded, but Mrs. Pelter did not know, and she resented Miss Amagee being called modern; she liked to think herself the one modern woman in Africa.

"Pretty tall stories, though—Teheran and Oruro—and especially that one about the gazelle," said Grosvenor.

"I think the stories are fairly all right and that they have been there," said Dr. Wilson.

"Ah, well, I'll believe in the shooting when I see it," said Colonel Grosvenor.

"And so will I," said Mrs. Pelter.

At supper at the Amagees' camp, Mr. Amagee talked about going to Khartoum in a flivver built by Mr. Henry Ford. After supper they walked to the other camp. Dr. Wilson welcomed them warmly, Mrs. Pelter and Colonel Grosvenor with less warmth. The gathering did not feel quite harmonious; there was a faint sense of strain in the air. Colonel Grosvenor looked at Miss Amagee with wholly unconscious disapproval; Mrs. Pelter, the woman of the world, patronized her with an almost effusive firmness. As a rule Miss Amagee was not easy to patronize; that night she was: she desired to travel to Khartoum in a flivver built by Mr. Henry Ford.

NEXT morning Mrs. Pelter was in a gloomy mood. It was being borne in upon her that you cannot fool all the people all the time. Colonel Grosvenor and Dr. Wilson had again gone out after roan; she had leisure to reflect, and she wished that she had never come to Potter's Gap. Her stay there seemed unlikely to turn out the stay she had pictured. She had seen herself sitting by the camp fire and Stephen Grosvenor, the hunter, coming home from the chase to sit at her feet; but he did not sit at her feet. And how she did wish that she had not expressed that firm intention of getting a lion! It seemed that at Potter's Gap, if you talked about your shooting, you were expected to shoot; but she had taken it for granted that that strong pen, which is known as a boma and is used by hunters free from all recklessness, would be erected for her to shoot a lion from in perfect safety. Colonel Grosvenor's suggestion that she should take his boys and go out and shoot one in the open seemed to her in the highest degree callous. She had no more use for a lion hunt of that kind than had Mr. Howard Hunter. She was pluckier than most women, but the lion's habit of lowering his head to the ground to roar, and so contriving to fill earth and heaven at night with the dreadful sound, had daunted her. Nothing would induce her to go on any such hunt; at the same time, nothing would induce her to forfeit the good opinion of Colonel Grosvenor. This was a dilemma.

That little American girl also was a nuisance. Mrs. Pelter had not missed the disapproving air with which Colonel Grosvenor had regarded her, but she had divined that, disapproving though it was, under it lay a considerable interest. She was aware that the fact that an interest starts with a little aversion does nothing to prevent it from becoming uncommonly keen. She decided to walk to the Amagees' camp and patronize the tiresome creature a little more. It would ease her annoyance, and the walk might clear her mind and help her find a way out of her dilemma.

She walked slowly through the long, thick grass, and she had not gone fifty yards when there came the happy idea; a sprained ankle was the very thing. Walking through that grass one could not be expected to see holes. What could be more natural than to twist one's ankle in one? She would not, however, sprain it so far from the Amagees' camp. She walked on to within about seventy yards of it, then, pivoting round on one foot, she sank down on her hands and knees.

There she was: her ankle was sprained. For a moment she crouched there, viewing the world from a new angle. The grass was even longer than she had thought; it came right over her head. Snakes! She began to crawl forward to the Amagees' camp, shuddering, but she crawled forward. The tangle began to thin a little. There were bare patches of sand; on her right there were dense thorn bushes, on her left the high reeds of the stream. She must not forget which ankle she had sprained—which was it, left or right? Then it occurred to her that Colonel Grosvenor was uncommonly astute, and it might be well to make that sprained ankle more convincing. It ought to be swollen a little. . . . The butt of her rifle would do.

She sat up and set her teeth and raised the butt of her rifle, not very high, above her ankle. She did not strike it. Of a sudden she seemed to freeze into the position in which she sat; her fingers certainly froze on to the barrel of the rifle; her jaw dropped; she stiffened all over in a horrid paralysis of fear.

What *was* it?

There, in the reeds, not fourteen feet from her, crouched a long, yellowish-grey form, with a huge dark head, watching her.

Mrs. Pelter tried to scream, but the scream stuck in her throat. The sunlight struck down through the reeds, striping the yellow body with bars of shadow. Now it moved, raised its heavy head a little, its lips twitching and lifting in a snarl; its

"Swerve! Swerve, you fool!" shouted Miss Amagee.

whole body, from quivering nostrils to lashing tail, alive and uneasy with suspicion. Mrs. Pelter and the lion looked at one another. Then she got her throat clear, uttered a fearsome scream, dropped her rifle, and sprang and ran. The thorn bushes barred her path. She dodged frantically to and fro in an extremity of terror, trying to find a way through.

The lion trotted out of the reeds and stood lashing his tail and snarling at her.

Mrs. Pelter screamed again and yet again. The sound seemed to annoy the lion, for he roared, and then, just as she found a gap, came loping towards her. She came through the gap to see the Amagees' camp sixty yards away, and on the edge of it Miss Amagee, rifle in hand. She had not supposed that Mrs. Pelter would scream like that for nothing.

Out of the gap in the thorn bushes came Mrs. Pelter, running like the wind; after her, directly behind her, came the lion.

"Swerve! Swerve, you fool!" shouted Miss Amagee.

Mrs. Pelter was far too frightened to hear, much less to understand. The lion was right on her. Miss Amagee chanced it. She could see the lion's hindquarters; she fired. If the bullet missed Mrs. Pelter by three-quarters of an inch, it was all it missed her by. The lion swerved—fortunately to

the left, clear of Mrs. Pelter. Miss Amagee fired again. The lion leapt oddly and clumsily six feet into the air, and came down and rolled over and over, snarling and clawing at the ground, and lay still. Mrs. Pelter ran on and dropped in a heap at the feet of Mr. Amagee.

They gave her brandy, neat, and it soon restored her, for she was of a considerable toughness. She told them that she had been walking along to pay them a visit and had seen the lion in the reeds, and he had gone for her.

"What?" said Miss Amagee in astonished accents. "Do you mean to say that you came out without your gun?"

"No. I had my rifle," said Mrs. Pelter.

"And you didn't use it?" said Miss Amagee, and there was a note of contempt in the astonishment.

"No. I dropped it. It was the surprise and the shock," said Mrs. Pelter. "I ran."

"M'm. If you'd walked, the lion would have walked—the other way," said Miss Amagee.

They walked down to the lion cautiously, the Amagees with their rifles trained on it; but the lion was dead. Mr. Amagee examined it.

"Scored his hind-quarters pretty deep with the first shot and got him plumb in the centre of the chest with the second," said Mr. Amagee in pleased accents.

Miss Amagee examined the lion. "I don't know as he would have walked off if you had stood still," she said to Mrs. Pelter. "He's old and thin, and a bit mangy. Might be a man-eater. They take to men when they're not quick enough for animals."

There was a pause; then Mr. Amagee said thoughtfully: "I wonder what they do to people who shoot lions without a licence?"

Miss Amagee shrugged her shoulders. "If it's a fine, I don't know how we're going to pay it," she said.

Mrs. Pelter was herself, or very nearly herself, again. Another happy idea came to her.

"I believe the fine is very heavy," she said. "Of course, you did it to save my life; but I don't think that that would weigh very much with the authorities. How would it be—how would it be——" She paused and they looked at her. "How would it be if I said I shot the lion?"

They went on looking at her, with eyes more thoughtful.

Then Mr. Amagee said doubtfully: "That's vurry kind of you, lady."

"If it would work," said Miss Amagee, doubtfully. "And you sure *would* get a lot of credit for shooting a man-eater."

Mrs. Pelter's eyes sparkled, and she said quickly: "Why shouldn't it work?"

"Our boys saw me shoot him," said Miss Amagee.

"I should have thought that you could get them to hold their tongues for very little," said Mrs. Pelter.

"You can't get a nigger to hold his tongue," said Mr. Amagee with conviction.

There was a pause; they pondered.

"Of course, if we could get them out of the district quite quick enough before they talked," said Miss Amagee.

"But what's to prevent you? You've no particular reason for staying here," said Mrs. Pelter.

"We've made a long trek, and we aimed to let the boys rest a while. Besides, travelling as slow as we do, they're always

meeting up with other niggers and talking," said Miss Amagee. "And after all the lion was a man-eater. I ought to get a reward, not a fine. And they take a lot more shooting than a young lion; they're so cunning. But I never did have any luck. I sure wish we could get out of the district quick."

There was another pause; again they pondered.

Then Miss Amagee said slowly and not hopefully: "Say: do you want both them flivvers?"

Mrs. Pelter hesitated. But to have shot not an ordinary lion, but a man-eater!

"If we could bundle our boys into a flivver and get right away before they git a chance to talk," said Mr. Amagee.

"Why, that's an idea. I've been telling Mr. Hunter for a long time that we should get on quicker with only one car to get into trouble," said Mrs. Pelter, quickly but untruthfully. "Why—yes. Why shouldn't I lend you a car to get to Khartoum in? You could leave it there for us if you'd finished with it. If not, it doesn't matter. In fact, it would be a blessing to get rid of it. I *will* let you have a car."

"It's vurry kind of you, lady," said Mr. Amagee.

They lost no time. The Amagees struck camp with uncommon quickness. They went to the camp of Colonel Grosvenor quickly. Quickly and firmly the objections of the outraged Mr. Hunter to parting with a car were overruled by Mrs. Pelter. Quickly the boys piled themselves and the luggage into the car.

Just before they had finished Miss Amagee found herself apart with Mrs. Pelter, and Mrs. Pelter said: "It's quite understood that if I get you out of trouble for shooting this lion, neither you nor Mr. Amagee will ever admit that I did not shoot it. Unpleasant people always misinterpret one's motives."

"Sure, it's understood," said Miss Amagee.

She looked Mrs. Pelter in the eyes as she spoke, and Mrs. Pelter knew that as far as the Amagees were concerned the secret was safe this side of the crack of doom.

Then through the bushes came Colonel Grosvenor and Dr. Wilson. Mrs. Pelter stepped forward and told them, proudly, of her shooting of the man-eater. She said that her first shot was bad, for it was the first time she had fired at a lion, but her second shot was all right. Dr. Wilson looked surprised, but his congratulations were warm; Colonel Grosvenor's were not warm. He looked at Miss Amagee with an expression in which loathing seemed to be mingled with admiration.

Miss Amagee was sorry to part with Dr. Wilson, and she said so. He shook hands with them both; Colonel Grosvenor held aloof.

They stepped into the car.

"So long, Doc," said Miss Amagee.

"Good-bye, Miss Amagee."

"Good-bye, Colonel," said Miss Amagee.

"Good-bye," replied the Colonel, and loathing and admiration appeared to struggle in his eyes.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Pelter," said Miss Amagee. "You sure have been terribly kind to us."

In Colonel Grosvenor's eyes loathing won.

"Only too delighted," said Mrs. Pelter in the kindest accents.

THE car jolted off; they watched it go. It jolted down the hillside. Mrs. Pelter sent Mr. Hunter and three boys to skin her man-eater, and went into her tent to write up her diary—for publication.

She wrote: "This morning I shot a lion, a fine black-maned man-eater, who has been preying on the unfortunate natives of this district for years. Failed to get him with the first shot, but got him with the second. Warmly congratulated by my friends."

She hesitated over the last sentence. Not because it was not true. Truth was not a thing that worried Mrs. Pelter's diary. But she felt a little piqued because Stephen Grosvenor had said so little. If it was a compliment that he should take it as a matter of course that she should shoot a lion, it was not one that really appealed to her.

As the two men went to their tent, Dr. Wilson said: "Odd, their going off so suddenly—in one of Hunter's cars, too."

"Yes," said Colonel Grosvenor, in a tone of indifference.

"I wonder whether the stories they told us were all true?" said Dr. Wilson.

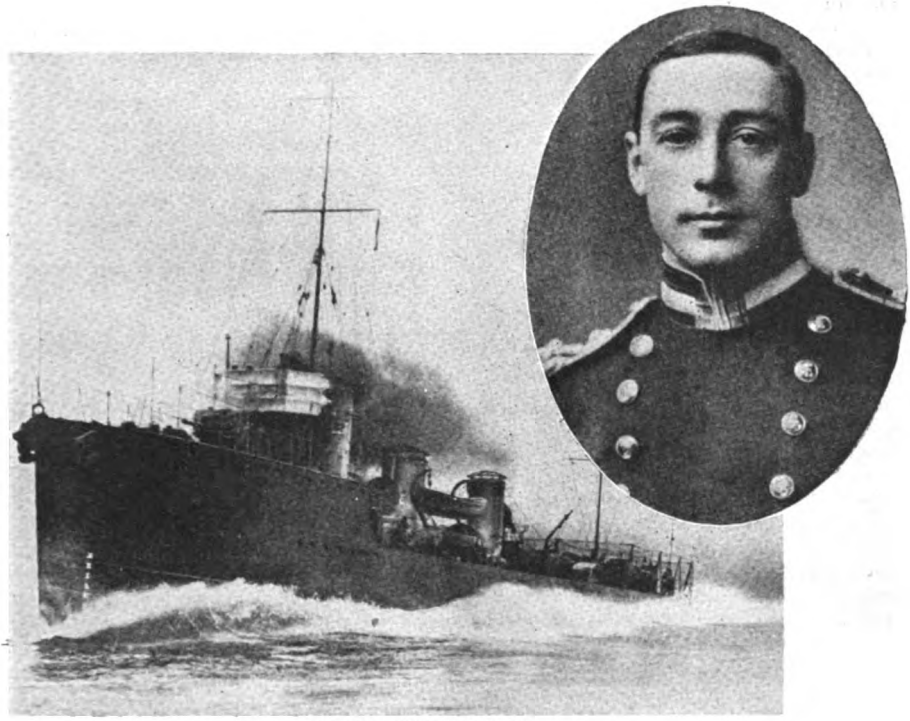
"There's no saying," said Colonel Grosvenor. "But the old man wasn't lying when he said that girl could shoot."

Some time later, as Miss Amagee relieved her father at the wheel of the car, she said, in a tone of satisfaction: "Not a bad deal, Pop—a flivver for a mangy old lion."

"I guess we did get the best of the bargain," said Mr. Amagee.

"The dame doesn't think so. She wanted that lion mighty bad, and she got him," said Miss Amagee.

"But did she?" said Mr. Amagee. "All the while you were shooting that lion and making the deal, kid, that there 'Stiff-faced Stephen' was standing among them thorn trees on the rise, not a quarter of a mile away, watching with his glasses. She wanted a lion; but I guess you sold her a pup."



H.M.S. "SPITFIRE."
Inset: Captain C. W. E. Trelawny, R.N.

On the "SPITFIRE" at JUTLAND

By

Captain C. W. E. Trelawny, R.N.

An article that gives the reader an exact idea of what it means to take part in a great sea-fight

I.

IN the North Sea on the night of May 31st–June 1st, 1916, there was a moderate breeze from the south-west. There was a slight motion of the sea, the weather was overcast, visibility was about three miles. Sunrise was at two a.m. Greenwich mean time.

At nine o'clock in the evening the British Grand Fleet had turned to a southerly course parallel with that of the German Fleet, and to the east of them. The British battleships then formed in three parallel columns at one mile intervals, and the destroyer flotillas took position on an east and west line five miles in the rear. The

German battleships, so far as one can make out now, were in one long column. The *Westfalen*, *Nassau*, *Rheinland*, and *Posen* were the first four in line. Farther back was the *Friedrich der Grosse*, the flagship of the German Fleet. The *Derfflinger* and *Von der Tann*, battle cruisers, which had done heavy execution in the afternoon (the *Derfflinger* was badly damaged), brought up the rear of the German line, which had light cruisers and destroyers screening it on either side.

All this was unknown to the British Fourth Flotilla, to which my destroyer, H.M.S. *Spitfire*, belonged. We had left Scapa Flow late on May 30th, without expectation of anything beyond the usual fruitless sweep into the North Sea. Once before we had fallen in with enemy destroyers, in the night preceding the Scarborough raid (December 16th, 1914), but our ship at that time was at the end of the line, and we had no chance of firing a shot. Some of the enemy's shots came near enough to us that night to give us a taste of being under fire. But it was all so dark and so confused that I don't think we realized what the real thing would be like. Apart from that brush, our former sweepings had been without action.

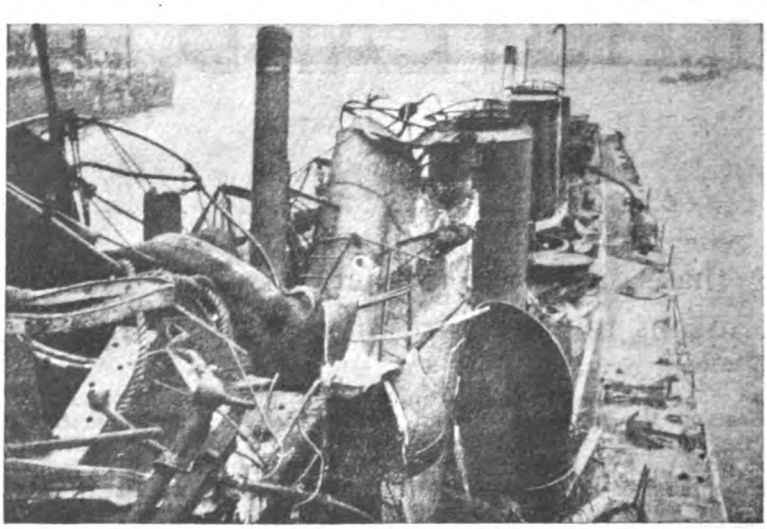
About noon on May 30th the Commander-in-Chief signalled that the Battle Cruiser Fleet was engaging the enemy, and that we might expect to meet them in a few hours. From time to time the signal came to increase speed another knot. Each signal made us more certain that before long we should at last be really in action.

The hours of waiting seemed interminable. Our thoughts went home to those in happy ignorance of the coming fight. But there were the last-minute preparations to make and the battle flags to hoist, which gave us a glorious thrill. Now we heard the sound of guns, and saw flashes on the horizon.

The deployment of the Battle Fleet meant that our flotilla, with the other flotillas and cruisers, had to race to the head of the line. What a race it was! The wakes of so many vessels going full speed close beside each other caused most curious breakers, which were occasionally mistaken for signs of submarines, and a good deal of firing took place away behind us.

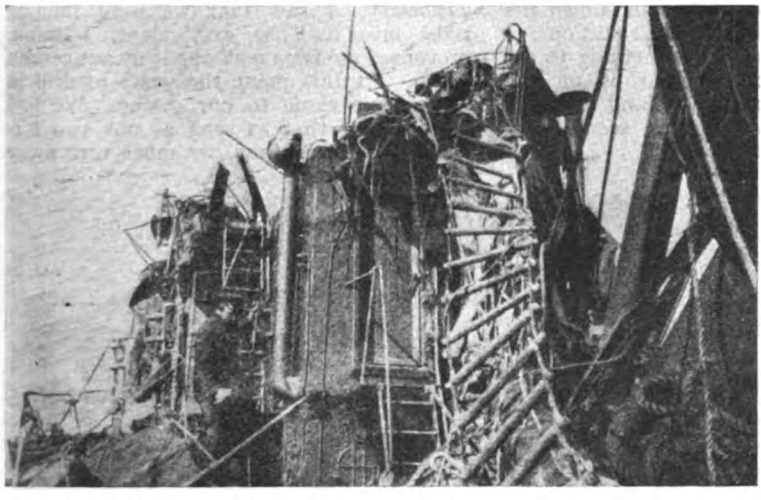
Presently the destroyer *Acasta* came hurtling right across the track of the fleet. She was flying "Not under control" signals. She had been detached from our flotilla with H.M.S. *Shark* (Commander Loftus Jones, V.C.) the day before, and attached to the battle cruisers. She had evidently come in for her share of the fighting. Her crew were all cheering hard, and we cheered back, and cheered again as we saw the bow and stern of a big ship sticking up out of the water. But our cheers ceased suddenly as we read the name *Invincible* on the stern portion.

We were now in position ahead of the Battle Fleet, and we knew we might be ordered to deliver a daylight torpedo attack, or to repel one, at any moment. We awaited orders. No shots seemed to be reaching us, but from the bridge we could see plenty of splashes. We steamed along, watching and waiting. As time went on smoke from gunfire and enemy smoke-screens, together with mist, obscured everything; and at dusk we found ourselves still steaming with no firing going on, except the sporadic salvos which would start now and then when someone ahead or astern would catch a glimpse of an enemy vessel.



AFTER THE ACTION.
Fore bridge looking aft. Note the decks swept clear of boats, etc.

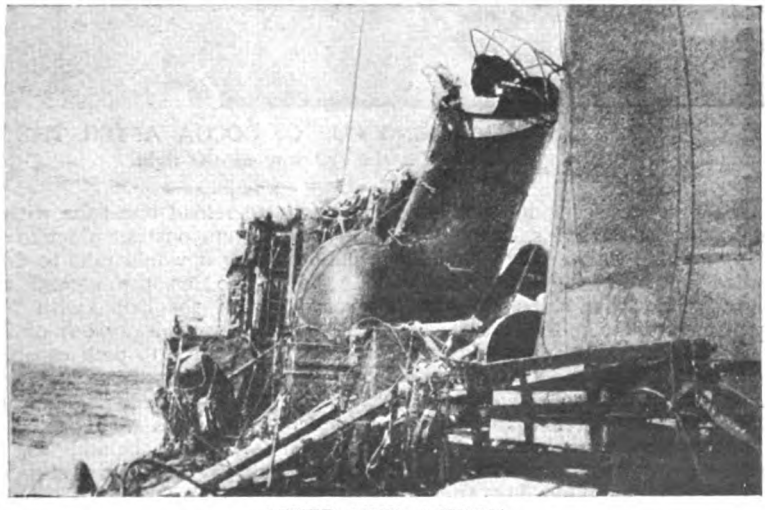
During this lull in the fighting we found time to work out our position, and to the best of my recollection were about fifty miles N.N.W. of Horn's Riff. It is known now that at this



AFTER THE ACTION.
Fore bridge and wireless office, showing the ladder that went up to the crow's nest.

time Admiral Scheer was turning away to avoid further action, and was making for the German coast; that Admiral Jellicoe, having decided not to fight a night action, was turning southward to attempt to intercept the enemy at daybreak before he reached the shelter of his shore defences. The disposition of the fleets at this time has already been indicated, but we knew nothing beyond our orders to form five miles astern of the Battle Fleet. We reached this position about nine-thirty p.m. Our course was south, seventeen knots, and our flotilla, about ten o'clock, was in single line ahead. Our flotilla leader was *Tipperary*, and we were second in line. After us came *Sparrowhawk*, *Garland*, *Contest*, *Broke*, *Achates*, *Ambuscade*, *Ardent*, *Fortune*, *Porpoise*, and *Unity*. I am about to relate how we ran into the German Fleet, which, unknown to us, was cutting across the track of our Battle Fleet, astern of them. We were to encounter the German Second Scouting Group, consisting of *Frankfurt*, *Pillau*, and *Elbing* (light cruisers), which, with the *Rostock* (light cruiser) and German destroyers, was accompanying the first squadron of the German Battle Fleet, the battleships *Westfalen*, *Nassau*, *Rheinland*, *Posen*, *Oldenburg*, *Heligoland*, *Thuringen*, *Ostfriesland*, and *Friedrich der Grosse* (Fleet Flagship).

The course laid down for our flotilla was to meet with the heaviest part of the German line; our four leading destroyers were shortly to engage not only with cruisers but with dreadnoughts. But nobody knew.



AFTER THE ACTION.
Foremost funnel, bridge, searchlight (which was thrown forty feet out of position), and fallen mast in foreground.

II.

WE had, indeed, no idea of the result so far of the battle, or of where the enemy might be, or even where all our own ships were. But we were ordered to keep a sharp look-out for the enemy, which

we did, with an occasional talk down the voice-pipe to the officers at their stations. I imagine we may have had something to eat and drink, brought along to us on the bridge, but in the excitement and strain of the watching and waiting we seemed oblivious to the need of food.

AN EARLY MORNING CUP OF COCOA AFTER THE FIGHT.
Captain Trelawny on the right.

After what seemed hours of steaming along in the darkness, keeping close up in *Tipperary's* wake, the first lieutenant called up from the after gun, saying he thought he saw ships on our starboard quarter (*i.e.*, to the N.W.).

Sure enough, in a few minutes we could see from the bridge a line of ships coming along in the same direction as ourselves, but steaming faster than we were. Some thought they were our own ships, but we were taking no risks, and had our two torpedo tubes and our guns trained on them.

Gradually they drew level with us, and as they did so *Tipperary* made the secret challenge. This was immediately replied to by a burst of fire from the leading enemy ships, concentrated on poor *Tipperary*. In a moment she was all ablaze. At the same moment we fired our two torpedoes and saw one of them hit. But I saw the most infernal storm of shells hitting the water just ahead of us, and all around *Tipperary*. I saw that we were running right into it. The excitement, I think, prevented me from realizing it meant certain death. At this point the years of drill in peace time came to our rescue. We had been taught that as soon as our two torpedoes had been fired, we must turn away to reload one tube with the spare torpedo. From constant practice one could judge how long it would take to do the job.

So, as the second torpedo went, over went the helm, with "Full speed ahead." We were away out of it before the enemy had time to pick us up.

The question was, at whom to fire the spare torpedo? That was soon solved, for as soon as we resumed our course, we saw *Tipperary* behind us, a dreadful blazing torch. She was stopped, and was being fired at under the concentration of the enemy's searchlights. So back we went to attack the ships attacking her. Unfortunately, as we turned back the torpedo davit was struck in three places. Three men were wounded, and the torpedo could not be got into the tube.

As we got near I suppose I felt maddened at seeing our leader disabled and being so fiercely attacked. I gave what must have seemed the hopeless order to fire at the

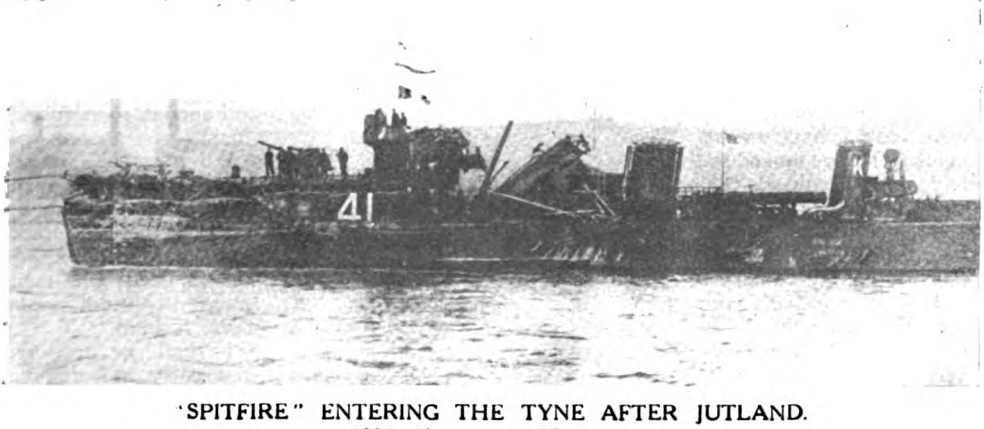
enemy searchlights. All praise to them, the gun's crew (officers and men) responded to the order as coolly as if at target practice. Those lights went out.

And now to my horror, in the light of the burning *Tipperary*, I saw bearing down upon us a large enemy vessel, making as if to ram us; and just beyond him another vessel, so that if we went on we should be cut in two, and if we turned the same way we should get caught by one or both of them. There was nothing for it but to turn towards the nearest ship and trust to luck to avoid him. We turned at high speed, but, oh! how slowly we seemed to come round. Everything was lit up by the burning *Tipperary*. As the enemy loomed nearer and nearer, it seemed impossible that we could get clear. Those aft noted that the enemy had three funnels with a red band on each. On the bridge we were blinded by the flashes of our fo'c'sle gun. All I recall is that she had a large crane amidships, and looked big. I saw that we were in for it, port bow to port bow. Sure enough, in a moment there was a most ghastly crash, shell bursts and splinterings. Things fell all round me, and I imagine I lost consciousness for a short time, for the next thing I remember was seeing the water within a few feet of my face and saying to myself: "We must be sinking."

I suppose that no vessel can have sustained a more terrific shock. Our speed would have been nearly thirty knots, and that of the *Nassau* (as she afterwards proved to be) at least twenty, so we must have crashed past each other at a good fifty miles an hour. All the boats, davits, etc., on the port side were swept clean away, and one man was thrown or blown overboard from the fo'c'sle gun and never seen again. The bridge and each light platform were completely demolished, and the mast and foremost funnel were brought down. This damage was partly done by the blast of a large calibre gun, which was fired at us at the moment of collision. The projectile went through the starboard bridge screens without exploding. Another projectile of the same calibre, six or eight inch, passed through the bottom of the second funnel from port fore side to starboard after side, grazing the top of the boiler. It was fortunate this did not explode. We may have received this earlier, or just before colliding.

The forecastle was torn open from the stem to abreast the galley, for forty feet above water, and from the stem to the second bulkhead below water. On the fore mess deck no side plating was left, from the level of the deck to the tops of the lockers, for a length from the stem as far as the capstan engine. Some water got into the store-rooms between the second and third bulkheads, but the third bulkhead held well, and there was never any water in fore magazines or shell-rooms or on the lower mess deck.

Of those on the bridge, three were killed outright and three were severely wounded. But, again, of all this I knew nothing at that time. I was lying flat on the upper deck, thirty feet from where the bridge had been, with my head over the side. I was staring at the water. Then I felt myself being picked up and found myself holding on to Chief Stoker Weavers. I discovered afterwards that he had a broken jaw. Soon I found myself by the midship gun. I was asking them angrily why they weren't firing. We were all so dazed by the shock for the moment we didn't realize what was



"SPITFIRE" ENTERING THE TYNE AFTER JUTLAND.
Note the improvised mast.

happening. However, we very soon recovered ourselves and took stock of things.

Bush, our first lieutenant, was already steering the ship from aft. He noted the course to be N.W. just before the collision, and continued on that course. Others, including Weavers, with the broken jaw, were trying to put out a fire round the foremost funnel. They succeeded in doing this. At this juncture someone gave a shout, and looking up through the darkness we saw a large ship coming towards our stern. First we saw two funnels with a cloud of smoke coming up between them, and then, as she passed under our stern, we saw flames flickering under her fo'c'sle, and then she was gone, with never a sign to indicate whether she was friend or foe.

III.

NOW it was time to attend to ourselves. The extent of the damage to *Spitfire* was such that I decided not to endeavour to rejoin the fleet, but to make for port. We found we could steam and steer all right, provided we could keep the sea from coming in through the tremendous gash on our port bow, so we blocked this up with everything we could lay our hands on—collision mats, hammocks, mess-tables, etc., etc. Still the water came in, so eventually we had to cut away some plating and let it flow harmlessly through on to the upper deck and overboard. This meant, of course, that all storerooms forward had to be sealed down and were inaccessible. It was gradually getting lighter, so we could get some idea of the state we were in. My first impressions were somewhat pessimistic. Things looked so bad that I caused the steel chests of confidential books to be thrown overboard lest they should fall into enemy hands.

The bridge was no longer there, only a tangled mass of wreckage, with a short circuit from the electric current to the searchlight running all through it. However, there were two or three men alive there. One was jammed by the leg, and our young doctor (Bell) had to amputate it to release him. Can you beat the nerve of them both?

"Spitfire's" coxswain with "Monk," the ship's mascot.

The coxswain was found delirious amidst the remains of his steering-wheel, and he was removed to the chart-house. One of his brother petty officers tended him until we got into harbour.

It was not only those on the bridge who suffered. Farther aft we found the spare torpedo almost in its tube. As I have said, a shell struck and disabled the loading apparatus and injured the torpedo gunner (White) and some of the tube's crew. At the after gun a man was lying very badly wounded. There were many other minor casualties. All these we carried down and made as comfortable as possible in the wardroom, which served as temporary surgery. By this time the two fires—one about the funnel, the other amongst the signalling flags—had been got under control. It was in investigating the wreckage of the mast and foremost funnel that we discovered how narrow had been our escape from damage and loss of life in the foremost boiler-room. There was a great shell graze right across the deck and a hole through the bottom of the second funnel, and the effect down below must have been appalling, but those on duty in this boiler-room put on gas masks and calmly manipulated their valves, cocks, and fans until all danger was over, and everything in their department was as serviceable as it could be made. These men were Chief Petty Officer Lee, Petty Officer Gardner, and Stoker Elvens.

Well, by then we felt we were getting along. We were still afloat and still able to steam, and as it got light we found all our three guns intact, and enough men to man them.

We got the torpedo into its tube and ready to fire, the galley fire was burning, and cocoa was coming along. So we "spliced the main-brace" in time-honoured naval fashion.

I shall never forget that early morning cup of cocoa. We officers, all muffled up, grimed and hollow-eyed, were seated on the ammunition sacks, sheltered by what remained of the canvas protection to the steering-wheel, and the first lieutenant with his usual presence of mind borrowed the

doctor's camera and took a snapshot of us. After that he thought it would be well to have some means of signalling, so he rigged up some spars and we got together the fragments of flags we could collect from the partially-burnt-out lockers, and stitched them together to make the necessary signal flags to indicate our number, etc. We found our Union Jack amongst the wreckage. The White Ensign aft was still flying.

We visited the wounded from time to time. One poor man was dead. Another young seaman with his fore-arm off was sitting up in a deck-chair as cheery as a sandboy.

Then we took turns to go down and have a wash and brush-up, and when I saw my face in the glass I wondered that anyone could recognize me. I had two black eyes, practically no cap left, and a nice little dent in the crown of my skull, and my funnybone seemed to have taken up new quarters on the knuckle of my thumb. No. 1, too, found that he had a stiff shoulder, which was not surprising, as later on a piece of shrapnel was located there.

The son of the "Spitfire's" coxswain, with all that remained of her steering-wheel after Jutland.

Now came the sad task of collecting the dead. From the bridge their mates reverently removed the bodies of the leading signalman and my messenger. After a search we found the body of the other signalman at the bottom of a stokehold ventilator. He had been blown there from the bridge, and my brass parallel rulers from the chart table were down there with him, bent into a crescent.

Providence must have had a special care for me, for I was the only one comparatively unharmed out of those who were on the bridge. The leading signalman (who was standing alongside me) had been decapitated. My messenger, who was on the other side of me, was cut clean in two at the waist. The wheel was behind me, and its spokes had all been knocked out. It is a mystery why the coxswain should have got concussion of the brain instead of also being in two halves. Incidentally, we preserved the remains of the wheel, and it is now the coxswain's proud possession.

The dead bodies, together with that of the man who had died in the wardroom, were all sewn up in hammocks, weighted with a shot, and reverently covered up. Later in the day we buried our killed in the customary manner, reading the Burial Service over them, with all hands aft to pay them the last honours.

IV.

ABOUT midday the wind changed and the sea got up to such an extent that we had to abandon our original idea of steering straight to land and making Harwich. We had to keep our starboard bow to the weather, and so steer farther north. We sighted a Norwegian steamer and came close to her, and by flags asked her where we were, but as we had no chart the position she gave us was not much use. She evidently thought we were in a bad way, as she signalled offering to take us off. We signalled a polite negative and came to the conclusion that as she was steering away from England, if we steamed along her wake in the opposite direction we should hit England, and possibly the Humber. Alas! the wind again baffled us. We could do nothing except keep the sea on our undamaged bow. So as the day wore on we were edged farther and farther away from our objective, and night closed down leaving us to the mercy of the wind.

Somewhere about the middle of the night things seemed very bad. No. 1 and I thought we might really have to make distress signals, so we got the box of "fireworks" on deck, and sat on it until dawn brought a lull in the bad weather, and we were able to steer towards land again. Soon, to our intense relief, we sighted some of our minesweepers, who gave us our course for the Tyne. Just about midday on June 2nd we reached the entrance with our make-shift number flying. We refused to take a rope from a tug until our two quarter-masters, who had stuck to the after wheel ever since the collision, had steered us safely between the piers. These two quarter-masters each had a hand damaged, but fortunately one the right and the other the left, so between them they provided a very able pair. Several times in the thirty-six hours I offered to have them relieved, but they were determined to take the ship into harbour. They did.

She was a stout ship to get home. I am eternally grateful to her builders, Messrs. Swan, Hunter, and Wigham Richardson, and

to their *employés*. No ship could have stood the knocks that the *Spitfire* took without the true and perfect workmanship put into her by them.

We were very soon berthed close to the submarine depot ship *Bonaventure*, and hospital boats came and removed our wounded, whilst those of us remaining on board were taken in charge by our opposite numbers of the *Bonaventure*, and right well looked after. I believe I still have her captain's pyjamas.

I remember one of the best things was the real cleaning up we received from the medical staff. I was too sore to want to scrub myself very hard, but they had some wonderful stuff (peroxide of hydrogen ?), and, lo and behold ! I was clean again. We had a real good night's rest and the next day we were taken into dock. There we had to get down to business, and a conference soon decided that *Spitfire* wanted a few repairs, and that her crew could do with a rest.

First of all we had to dispose of the slice of German dreadnought that we had on board. This was about twenty foot of side-plating, an upper strake, the top part having part of the gutterway and deck plating adhering to it, and the lower part having some side scuttle-holes. It was left all mushed up on and in our fo'c'sle. We thought it worth keeping, as experts might be able to deduce from its characteristics the type of enemy vessel we had been involved with. At that time we thought it was only a cruiser, and by the thickness of the paint (three-thirty-seconds of an inch) she did not seem a very new ship. I may mention that this souvenir was later on dispatched to the U.S.A. in connection with a propaganda campaign, and there perhaps it still is. I have never been able to trace it.

ACROSTICS.

OUR thirty-eighth series of acrostics begins with No. 177, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 177.

LEFT is brilliant, right is green,
Lovely jewels here are seen.

1. Fruit. To learn it schoolboys hate.
   Instance, 1928.
2. Industry of Hollywood,
   Headless, be it understood.
3. Does it—thus I sadly ponder—
   Really make the heart grow fonder ?
4. Mother, stay ! Though healthy, feign
   To be ill and full of pain.
5. Drowned herself for love and sadness,
   But did Hamlet share her madness ?
6. Note ! Such ways are not amiss,
   Be not sharp nor flat, but this.
7. Priest in Britain long ago
   Sacred held the mistletoe.

BOODLEBAR.

Answers to Acrostic No. 177 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on April 12th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 176.

THE fate of Europe was decided here,
And eighteen-fifteen was the fateful year.

1. Noisy, indeed ; but when we use a pair,
   We get, perchance, a gentle breath of air.
2. Here shields and spears of fire were seen at night
   Moving across the sky like men in fight.
3. This and the Holy Hill to distant men
   Were shadowed forth with pencil and with pen.
4. In time we find a river, and our word
   Has synonym that rhymes with coin and bird.
5. When met abroad, it possibly sounds queer,
   And, further, there is nothing like it here.
6. Three arrows from a friend the news conveyed
   To one whose hiding-place by this was made.
7. Who strikes the light would find it sound ; 'twere meet
   Perhaps, that one small word we should repeat.
8. A ring of fire, possessor of a bill,
   Whose neck is long and legs are longer still.

PAX.

1. B	ello	W
2. A	meri	A
3. T	omohri	T
4. T	enebros	E
5. L	eathe	R
6. E	z e	L
7. O	r b	O
8. F	laming	O

NOTES.—Light 2. Plutarch, Life of Caius Marius, ch. 17. Light 3. Tennyson, To E. L., on his Travels in Greece. Mount Athos, Monte Santo, Holy Hill. 4. Tenuse, time. Ebro. Dark, mark, lark. 5. In France, *cuir* ; queer. There's nothing like leather. 6. First book of Samuel, ch. 19. Light 7. The-orbo. Who strikes the theorbo.

"THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES"

A Great New "BULLDOG DRUMMOND" Serial

By

"SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

SYNOPSIS OF THE FIRST INSTALMENT.

Joe Dixon, the narrator of the story, was met by "Bulldog Drummond" at the station on his way to a country house-party. On arrival, Drummond discovered that his wife, Phyllis, had gone out alone in his car in response to a mysterious note. Later the police informed Drummond that the car had been found deserted some miles away. Drummond enlisted the aid of Darrell, Sinclair, Jerningham, and Longworth, those friends who had shared with him previous encounters with his bestial arch-enemies, Carl Peterson, Irma, and Henry Lakington. Drummond guessed that his wife had been abducted by the woman Irma in revenge for the death of Peterson, whom Drummond killed. His suspicions were confirmed by a quotation from Kipling, "For the female of the species is more deadly than the male," which had been sent to him anonymously. A blood-stained spanner—Drummond's own—suggested, however, that Phyllis had put up a fight before her capture. The party split up and scoured the country in the vain hope of tracing Phyllis. Darrell and Dixon found another deserted car. One of the seats was marked by blood-stains in a curious pattern. Darrell took a note of these, and returned to inform Drummond, leaving Dixon on guard. A supposed rustic approached Dixon and called him to look at a body in the hedge. Dixon fell into the trap, looked at the body—a man's—and instantly felt a pair of hands fastened round his throat.

DIMLY I realized that it was a trap; that the man had been acting a part so as to draw me into an advantageous position in which to attack me. And then all other thoughts were blotted out by the appalling knowledge that as far as strength went I was a child in his hands. There was a roaring in my ears, a ghastly tightness in my throat, and I remember that my last coherent thought before I became unconscious was that if Drummond had been in my place the result would have been very different.

It was fitting, therefore, that the first man I should see when I opened my eyes was Drummond himself. For a moment or two I couldn't remember what had happened, and I stared foolishly around. I was lying on the grass beside the road, and my head and coat were sopping wet. Drummond with Darrell and another man were standing close to me in the light of the head-lamps of a car.

"Hullo!" I said, feebly.

They swung round.

"Hullo, little man!" said Drummond. "You gave us a nasty shock. What fun and laughter have you been engaged in?"

"Where's the dead man?" I cried, sitting up.

Copyright, 1928, by H. C. McNeile.

They all stared at me.

"What's that?" said Drummond, slowly. "A dead man, you say?"

I struggled to my feet and stood swaying dizzily.

"Steady, old man," said Drummond. "Easy does it."

"There *was* a dead man," I repeated, and then I stared round. "Where's the other car?"

"Precisely," agreed Drummond. "Where is it? It wasn't here when we arrived."

"Not here?" I repeated, stupidly. "I don't understand. What's happened?"

"That's easily told," said Drummond. "By mere chance I ran into Peter at the police-station, and when I heard what you'd found I came along with him and this officer. We must have gone half a mile beyond here before he knew we'd gone too far. So we turned and came back. And the pool of oil told us where the car had been. Peter knew you couldn't drive, so we thought you must have been abducted in the car. And then quite by chance the officer found you in the ditch. You looked like a 'goner' at first, but we sluiced you with cold water, and you'll be as fit as a trivet in a minute or two. When you are, let's hear what happened to you."

"I'm all right now," I said. "A bit dizzy, that's all. Let me sit down in the car for a little."

And I told them exactly what had taken place. They listened in silence, and it was only when I hesitated a little over saying who it was I had expected to find in the ditch that Drummond spoke.

"I understand," he said, curtly. "Go on."

I finished my story, and then he spoke again.

"If any confirmation is needed," he remarked, "the ditch should supply it. Where was the body lying?"

I got out of the car and led them to the spot. As he had said, the ditch did supply it. A great pool of blood showed up red and sinister in the light of Darrell's torch, but of the body of the man whose blood it was there was no trace.

"So what happened," said Drummond, thoughtfully, "is fairly easy to spot. But the reason for it is a little more obscure. The gentleman who caressed your windpipe had evidently been sent back to retrieve car and corpse. Finding you here he gave you the necessary medicine. Then he removed corpse in car."

"Would you recognize the man who attacked you, sir?" said the police-officer, speaking for the first time.

"I think I'd recognize him," I said, "but I couldn't give you a description of him that would be the slightest help."

"Well, there doesn't seem much use our standing here any longer," remarked Drummond at length, and his voice was weary. "We know the number of the car, so the owner can be traced. But I shall be very much surprised if we find that helps us much."

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH WE GET THE SEMBLANCE OF A CLUE.

LOOKING back on it now after the lapse of time, I find it hard to recall my exact state of mind that night. I remember that amongst certain members of the house-party I found myself in the position of a popular hero. To have been assaulted and left for dead conferred an air of distinction on me which I found rather grateful and comforting.

I also remember experiencing a distinct feeling of pique that amongst other members of the party my adventure seemed to cut no ice at all. They appeared to regard it as the most ordinary thing in the world. Two new arrivals had come—the two whom Longworth had been told to summon under the names of Ted and Toby. Their surnames were respectively Jerningham and Sinclair, and Tracey had managed to squeeze them into the house. And it was in describing the events of the afternoon and evening to these two that the point of view of this second section of the party became obvious. To have it described by Darrell as getting a clip over the earhole struck me as somewhat inadequate.

However, I waived the matter: it was not my wife who had been forcibly dragged from her car in broad daylight. Had it been I should have been insane with worry. And that was the extraordinary thing about Drummond. Outwardly he seemed the most self-possessed of us all, and only the strained look in his eyes showed the mental condition he was in.

Bill Tracey was absolutely beside himself. That such a thing should have happened in his house made him almost incoherent. And it was characteristic of Drummond that, in spite of his own agonizing suspense, he should have gone out of his way to ease things for Bill.

It was Jerningham who summarized the situation after a while.

"Let's just see," he said, "that we've got this thing clear. Whilst playing tennis this afternoon Phyllis got a note delivered by hand of such importance that she stops playing and goes out alone in the Bentley. At that time Hugh was having a bit of back-chat with the two foreign-looking blokes——"

"Who have not been traced at the railway-station," put in Tracey.

"——who have since disappeared," went on Jerningham. "But it is generally agreed that they had something to do with it, though what, we don't know. Shortly after the Bentley is found deserted, showing every sign of having been the scene of a struggle."

"She dotted him one, Ted," said Drummond with certainty. "She dotted him good and hard with that spanner. In fact, she killed him—glory be to Allah!"

"Very well, then," said Jerningham, "make it so. She dotted him one. Finding herself suddenly attacked she out with the spanner and slogged him good and hard. So then the other bloke—there must have been at least one more—bunged Phyllis into the back of the other car, stuffed his pal into the seat beside him, and pushed off."

"It don't sound right to me, Ted," said Drummond, slowly.

"What's wrong?" demanded Jerningham.

"All the last part. If you were driving a motor-car in broad daylight, and had to take with you a fellow who was bleeding like a pig from a wound in the head, would you put him on the seat beside you?"

He took a long gulp of beer.

"Not so, old lad: you'd bung him on the floor at the back. And from Peter's description of the blood in the car that's what happened. If he'd been sitting in the seat beside the driver, the front of it would have been stained, too. It wasn't—only the back."

"I don't see that it matters much, anyway," I remarked. "Back or front, the result is the same. Perhaps Mrs. Drummond was beside the driver."

"Good Lord!" said Drummond, sitting up and staring at me. "I hadn't thought of that. Perhaps she was."

"What's stung you?" said Darrell, surprised, and we all looked at him curiously. He seemed strangely excited.

"Supposing Phyllis was sitting in that seat," he remarked. "Supposing the man was bleeding to death behind. Supposing she managed to get her hand over the back of the seat, with the idea of getting some message through by dipping her finger in the blood and writing on the cover."

His excitement infected us all, though, for the life of me, I couldn't see what he was getting at.

"Well—get on with it," said Darrell.

"Don't you see that the writing would be upside down?" cried Drummond.

"Where's your note-book, Peter? Turn the page the other way round."

We crowded over his shoulder and stared at the rough sketch.

"It is," shouted Drummond. "Smeared letters, or I'll eat my hat. There's a K there: two K's. And L: and E. What's that first word? Something KE . . . LUKE, is it?"

"Like," I hazarded. "That first letter might be L."

"Then it's LIKE LAK," said Drummond, and we stared at one another a little blankly. If that was the solution it didn't seem to advance us much. Like Lak: it was meaningless.

"Anyway," said Drummond, quietly, "it proves one thing. She wasn't unconscious."

He got up and went to the open window, where he stood with his back to us, staring out into the darkness. His shoulders were a little bowed: his hands were in his pockets. And, by Jove! I felt for the poor chap. There was no use sympathizing with him: the matter had passed beyond words. Besides, it struck me that he was of the brand that is apt to shy away from sympathy like a frightened colt.

IT didn't seem to matter very much whether or not Mrs. Drummond had been conscious in the car. Was she conscious now? Was she even alive? It seemed too incredible to be sitting there in that peaceful room, contemplating such an appalling thought. And yet what was there to be done? That was the maddening part of it. Literally the only clue in our possession was the number of the car—ZW3214. It was true that I might recognize the man who had nearly throttled me, but even on that point I felt doubtful. And that wasn't going to be much use, unless I saw him again.

The same applied to the two men at the Cat and Custard Pot Inn. Both Drummond and I would recognize them again—but where were they? And even if they were found they would probably prove to be only very minor characters in the cast. The telephone on Tracey's desk rang suddenly.

"Hullo!" said Tracey, picking up the receiver. "Yes—speaking."

Drummond had swung round, his hands still in his pockets. And he stood there, his face expressionless, while the metallic voice from the machine, punctuated by occasional grunts from our host, droned on. At last Tracey replaced the receiver and shook his head gloomily.

"Nothing, I'm afraid," he said. "It was the police. They've traced the car, and it belongs to a man called Allbright in Reading. He's a retired grocer, and absolutely above suspicion. He is away from home at the moment, and the car must have been coolly stolen from his garage this morning."

Once more silence fell on the room, and Drummond, with the faintest perceptible shrug of his shoulders, again turned his back on us and stared into the darkness. Our only positive clue gone—or at any rate valueless; the outlook blacker, if possible, than before.

And then at last Drummond spoke. His back was still towards us; his voice was perfectly quiet.

"This situation is too impossible to continue," he said. "Something is bound to happen soon."

And as if in answer to his remark the telephone bell jangled a second time.

"I told you so," he said, calmly. "This is news."

Tracey had again taken the receiver, and again we watched him with a kind of feverish anxiety.

"A lady wishes to speak to you, Drummond," said Tracey, and the tension suddenly became acute. "She won't give her name."

Drummond went to the instrument, and we waited breathlessly. We heard the metallic voice of the other speaker; we saw Drummond give an uncontrollable start, and then freeze into absolute immobility.

"So it is you," he said, in a low voice. "Where is Phyllis?"

Again that metallic voice, and then quite clearly a laugh.

"Damn you!" said Drummond, still in the same quiet tone. "What have you done with her?"

This time the voice went on for nearly a minute, and all we could do was to watch the changing expressions on his face, and try to imagine what was causing them. Anger, bewilderment, and finally blank surprise were all registered, and it was the latter which remained when the voice ceased.

"But look here!" he cried. "Are you there? Darn it—she's gone!"

He rang the bell furiously for the exchange.

"Where did that last call come from?" he asked. "London. Can you possibly get me the number?"

We waited eagerly, only to see him lay down the receiver wearily.

"The public call-box at Piccadilly Circus," he said.

"It was Irma?" almost shouted Darrell.

"Yes—it was."

"What did she say?" asked someone.

"She first of all said that she was charmed to renew her acquaintance with Phyllis and that it seemed quite like old times. She went on to say that so far she had only been able to have a very brief chat with her but that she hoped for many more in the near future. She was sure I would like to know that she was unhurt, but that how long that condition of affairs lasted depended on me entirely. That I should have a letter from her in the morning making things quite clear, and that all she could advise me to do for the present was to have a good night in. Then she rang off."

"Well, darn it—that's something," said Darrell. "We know she's unhurt."

"Yes—I don't think she would lie," agreed Drummond. "But what the devil is she getting at? How can it depend on me?"

"That seems fairly obvious," said Jerningham, gravely. "You're going to be put through it, old man, and if you don't play nicely Phyllis is going to suffer."

Drummond sat down heavily.

"I suppose you're right," he said, slowly. "I'll do anything—anything. I wanted to ask her to-night if she would take me instead of Phyllis, but she's rung off."

Darrell laughed shortly.

"I don't think the answer would have been very satisfactory even if she hadn't," he said. "You're not a very comfortable person to have about the house, old boy."

Drummond swore, and the next moment he had vanished through the open window.

"Poor devil," said Bill. "I'm sorry for him. But I don't see that there's anything to be done."

"There isn't," said Darrell. "We can only wait for this letter to-morrow morning."

He helped himself to a whisky-and-soda, and I followed his example. That was all we could do—wait for the letter. But it was impossible to prevent oneself speculating on the contents. What test was Drummond going to be put to? Was he going to be told to commit some crime? Some robbery possibly, with his wife's safety depending on his success?

And at last to bed I went—but not to sleep. Try as I would, I could not stop thinking about the affair.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE LETTER ARRIVES.

AND now I come to the beginning proper of the amazing adventure which was to occupy us for the next few days. The happenings of the preceding day were only the necessary preliminaries, without which the adventure could not have started. And it was with a queer feeling of excitement that I saw Drummond

We crowded over his shoulder and stared at the rough sketch.

standing in the hall holding a bulky letter in his hand. THE letter.

"How's the neck?" he remarked.

"So-so," I said. "You've heard from that woman?"

He nodded his head thoughtfully.

"I have. And I'll be hanged if I can make out if I'm mad or if she is. Go and hit a sausage, and then we'll have a council of war."

I WENT into the dining-room, to find that the rest of his pals had nearly finished. None of the women were down yet, so conversation was non-existent. And ten minutes later we all duly assembled in Tracey's study.

"I've read this letter twice," said Drummond, coming straight to the point, "and, as I said to Dixon, I don't know whether I'm mad or she is."

He looked a bit fine-drawn, I thought, but much less worried than he had done the previous night.

"I should think the best thing to do is for me to read it aloud to you," he went on. "The post-mark on the envelope is of no assistance. It was posted in London, and that doesn't help. Somewhat naturally also there is no address."

He spread out the sheets and began.

"MON AMI,—

"In case you have forgotten, I wish to recall to your memory the circumstances of our last meeting. A little more than six months ago, you may remember, we met beside the wreckage of the airship. And I told you then that I knew you had killed Carl. It matters not how I knew: some things are incapable of ordinary explanation. But if it is of any interest to you, I did, as a matter of fact, make further inquiries from people who had been on that last voyage. And from them I learned that I was right, and that you did kill him.

"Six months ago, Drummond, and during those six months you have never been out of my thoughts for long. There was no hurry, and during a winter spent in Egypt I have been indulging in the luxury of anticipation. They say it is better than realization; the next few days should decide that point as far as this particular case is concerned. There was another reason also which necessitated a little delay. Various arrangements had to be made in England—arrangements which took time. These have now been made, and I trust that in the near future you will find them satisfactory.

"However, I go too fast. The first thing I had to decide was what method I should adopt for punishing you adequately. My revenge, if I was to enjoy it to the full, had to be carefully thought out. I wanted nothing crude; I wanted something artistic. And above all I wanted something long drawn out.

"And so your brilliant intellect will at once perceive that no mere death coming suddenly out of the blue could fit into my ideas. You smile, perhaps. You recall that in the past you were frequently threatened with death and that you are very much alive to-day. Agreed, *mon ami*; but do not forget the little verse I sent you. Doubtless you have inspected the message contained in it, and it is up to me to prove that that message is no empty boast.

"For example, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have killed your dear Phyllis yesterday afternoon. And her positively murderous assault on one of my most trusted assistants really made me very angry for a while. The poor man is quite dead.

"In parentheses, *mon cher*, who on earth is the funny little man you left to guard the car when you found it? From the description I've heard he's a new one on me."

"Curse the woman!" I spluttered, and even Drummond grinned suddenly. Then he went on:—

"To return, however. It would have been very easy to have killed her, but so far from doing so the dear girl is sitting with me as I write. Not only easy—but just. We should have been all square. But I want more satisfaction than that, Drummond: much more. And so I will come down to my little scheme.

"In the past your physical strength has always excited my warmest admiration. But I have never been quite so certain about your mental ability. Luck, I think, has entered a good deal into the matter, and though I should be the last person to belittle luck, yet it is apt to affect the issue somewhat unfairly.

"And so on this occasion I propose to test your brain. Not unduly, I trust, but enough to afford me a certain amount of amusement. Do not be alarmed—your physical strength will be tested also. If you emerge triumphant your dear Phyllis will be restored to your bosom. If, on the other hand, you fail, then I shall claim my pound of flesh. In other words, what might have so easily been done yesterday afternoon will merely have been postponed.

"The test is expressed simply by two words: Find Phyllis. You raise your eyebrows: that, you say, is somewhat naturally the test. But wait, *mon ami*, and I will

explain a little further. You have doubtless heard of hidden treasure hunts, perhaps joined in one yourself. This is going to be run on the same rules. You will receive clues which you will interpret to the best of your ability. These clues will lead you to various places, where further clues will await you. They will also lead you to various places where you may or may not enjoy yourself. Things will happen which you may or may not like. In fact, my dear Drummond, to put the matter in a nutshell, you may or may not pull through. As I said, I have made my arrangements with some care.

" One further word. This little matter is between you and me. I have no objection to your roping in your friends—in fact, the more the merrier. But I don't want the police butting in. You could not avoid it yesterday afternoon, I know, so you are forgiven for that. But get them out of it now—quickly. Another thing, too. I don't want Uncle Percival, or whatever he calls himself, asking absurd questions from any of the Broadcasting Centres. If that should happen our little game would cease abruptly. So bear those two points in mind : no police, no broadcasting. And that, I think, is all. You will get your first clue to-day."

DRUMMOND laid down the letter and lit a cigarette.

" What do you think of it ? " he said.

" The thing is a fantastic leg-pull," cried Tracey.

But Drummond shook his head doubtfully.

" I wonder," he said. " What do you think, Peter ? "

" That she means every word of it, old boy," answered Darrell, positively. " That's no leg-pull : it's grim earnest."

" Hear, hear," said Jerningham. " We're for the trail again."

" You mean to tell me," spluttered Tracey, " that this woman has hidden your wife, and now expects you to go chasing round the country till you find her ? Dash it—it's absurd."

" Absurd or not absurd," said Drummond, gravely, " that is exactly what this woman has done. And from what I know of her it's going to be some chase. Look here, Tracey, and you, too, Dixon : may I rely on you not to say a word of this even to the ladies ? If this came to the ears of a newspaper man, we'd have the whole of Fleet Street on our heels. So—not a word to a soul."

" A police-sergeant to see you, sir."

The butler was holding the door open.

The officer who had gone with us to the deserted Bentley the previous afternoon entered the room.

" Good morning, sergeant," said Drummond, quietly. " Found Mr. Allbright's car yet ? "

The policeman shook his head.

" I'm afraid not, sir," he said. " May I ask if you have any news of your wife ? "

Drummond frowned suddenly ; then he gave a short laugh.

" Yes—I have. Look here, sergeant—you're a man of discretion."

I looked at him covertly. What tale was he going to tell ?

" Well, sir," said the officer, with a slightly gratified smile, " they don't make you a sergeant for nothing."

" Precisely," said Drummond. " Well—the fact of the matter is this. My wife has run away—bolted. With another man."

He lit a cigarette with a sort of savage resignation.

" I didn't say so yesterday, but I feared even then that that note which was brought her was from the damned swine who——"

He broke off abruptly—words had failed him—and strode to the window.

" Poor old Hugh," said Sinclair, sadly. " It's a devilish business. That dirty little sweep of all people, too."

Drummond invoked the Deity twice, while the sergeant stared at him blankly.

" But look here, sir," he said ; " what about all that blood ? "

" That, sergeant," remarked Drummond, " is the staggering part of the whole business. When my wife rang me up last night to tell me that she had—she had left me, she said : ' I suppose you've found the Bentley by now ? ' I said to her : ' But what about the blood on the grass ? ' She said : ' What on earth are you talking about ? If it's a riddle I haven't got time to buy it now.' Then she rang off. She knew nothing about it, sergeant—absolutely nothing."

The officer's face was blanker than before.

" Since then," went on Drummond, " we've been trying to reconstruct what happened. And the only possible conclusion we can come to is this. The car belonging to Mr. Allbright was stolen by two or three men. Driving along the road, they came on the deserted Bentley. Well, if they'd steal one car, they'd steal another. So they decided to steal that, too. And then they fell out—why, Heaven alone knows. Probably one of them was already at the wheel of the Bentley—and there was a struggle in which somebody got hit over the head with the spanner. Much harder than was intended. They all became frightened, and bundled the wounded man into the closed car. Of course," he continued, modestly, " it's only crude amateur deduction : there are doubtless many objections to our theory——"

"Many," agreed Darrell, staring out of the window.

"——which your trained brain will spot," went on Drummond. "But the great point as far as we are concerned is this. As far as I am concerned, I should say. The whole thing is merely an amazing coincidence. The blood we saw on the road, the blood in Mr. Allbright's car, has nothing to do with my wife's disappearance. And since I still have hopes that she will realize the error of her way, and come back to me, the last thing I want is to run any risk of hardening her heart by worrying her with police inquiries."

Drummond paused to recover his breath.

"What is this other gent's name, sir," said the sergeant, producing his pencil and notebook.

"Albert. Albert Prodnut," said Jerningham, and Drummond sat down abruptly.

"And his address?"

"I wish we knew," answered Jerningham. "If we did, doubtless by this time Captain Drummond would have removed his liver with a rusty penknife. I speak metaphorically."

"So you don't know where he is, sir?"

"Somewhere on the Continent," said Drummond, in a hollow voice. "Damn him!"

"And your wife, too?"

Drummond groaned, and hid his face in his hands, while Jerningham rose and took the sergeant by the arm.

"No more now, sergeant," he whispered, confidentially. "He is strung up to breaking point. In a week or two, perhaps. Or a month. And in the meantime you will treat what we have told you as absolutely confidential, won't you?"

He propelled him gently towards the door.

"It's all very strange, sir," the officer said in a worried voice.

The door closed behind the harassed officer, and Jerningham held up his two thumbs.

"Prodnut," said Drummond, weakly. "Why Prodnut?"

"Good morning, sergeant," said Drummond,

"Why not? It's very difficult to think of a name when you're suddenly asked for one. There is a ring of sincerity about Albert Prodnut that carries entire conviction."

"Look here, you fellows," said Tracey, seriously, "this is getting beyond a joke. You can't expect any man out of a

lunatic asylum to believe that absurd rigmarole."

" We had to say something," remarked Drummond. " Personally, I think we told the tale rather well."

" Yes—but what about me ? " said Tracey. " It's a tissue of lies from beginning to end."

" We can't tell the truth," answered Drummond, gravely. " Look here, Tracey, I'm very sorry about this, and I quite appreciate the difficulties of your position. In the bottom of your mind you probably think that that woman's letter is a bluff. I *know* it isn't. We've got to keep the police out of this if we possibly can. And I really couldn't think of anything better on the spur of the moment."

quietly. " Found Mr. Allbright's car yet ? "

Once again the door opened and Parker came in : this time with a telegram on a salver.

" For you, sir," he said, handing it to Drummond.

He tore open the yellow envelope, and as he read the message a look of complete bewilderment spread over his face. " Well, I'm damned ! " he muttered. " No answer, thank you, Parker. Listen here, you fellows," he went on as the butler left the room. " What in the name of fortune do you make of this ?

" ' My first a horse may draw or even two the rest is found at York and aids the view and when you've solved that bit by dint of trying an inn you'll find where fishermen are lying ' "

" It's the first clue," said Jerningham, excitedly. " She said you'd get it this morning."

" But it's hopeless," cried Drummond in despair. " The simplest cross-word reduces me to a gibbering wreck. If I've got to try and solve these damned things I'm done before I start."

" There are half-a-dozen perfectly good people to help you, old boy," said Darrell. " Sling the paper over. Let's put it down as it's meant to be—in the form of a verse."

He scribbled the words on a piece of paper, while we leaned over his shoulder. And even Tracey seemed impressed by this sudden new development.

" Now, then," said Darrell, " does that make it any better ? "

" 'My first a horse may draw, or even two;
The rest is found at York, and aids the view.
And when you've solved that bit by dint of trying,
An inn you'll find where fishermen are lying.' "

" If line three is right," I said, " the first two are a complete clue in themselves."

" That's so," agreed Tracey. " But what sort of clue? Is it the name of a man or a town or what? "

" Let's assume it's a town to start with," said Jerningham. " There's an inn mentioned in the last line."

" What the hell is found at York? " demanded Drummond, gloomily.

" Ham, dear old boy," burbled Algy Longworth.

" And Archbishops," said Sinclair, hopefully.

" I don't know that it can be truthfully maintained," said Tracey, mildly, " that either ham or Archbishops aid the view."

" Hold hard a bit," remarked Darrell. " Let's start at the beginning. 'My first a horse may draw, or even two.' Presumably that means two horses. So it's a horse-drawn vehicle suitable for one or two horses."

" By Jove! Peter, you're a blinking marvel," cried Drummond. " Cart, cab, wagon."

" You don't have a two-horse cab," objected Jerningham.

" Wagon sounds possible," said Darrell. " There must be places beginning with Wagon. Got a map, Tracey? "

" Here's the '*Times* Gazetteer,' " he answered. " By Jove! Wagonmound."

" Got it! " shouted Drummond. " There's bound to be a mound at York."

But Tracey was shaking his head.

" Sorry. I spoke too soon. The darned place is in New Mexico. And that's the only place beginning with Wagon that's mentioned."

" Hell! " said Drummond, and relapsed into silence.

" What about Dray? " I remarked. " You speak of a one-horse dray and a two-horse dray."

" Stout fellow," cried Drummond. " Look up Dray, Tracey."

" There are about forty Draytons," he said. " Lots of Draycotts; Drayminster, Drayney."

" Drayminster! " I yelled. " Minster, York Minster."

" I believe you've got it," said Darrell. " It fits, at any rate, as far as the first two lines are concerned."

" By Jove! you fellows," cried Jerningham. " Listen here. This is the A.A. hand-book. Drayminster. Population two thousand two hundred and thirty-one. Sussex. Fifty-five miles to London. Now brace yourselves for it. Hotel—the Angler's Rest. We *have* got it."

For a while we all stared at one another, too excited to speak. Was there a mistake? Fishermen lying; Angler's Rest. No one could say that York Minster was not an aid to the view; a dray could certainly be drawn by one or two horses. It fitted. every clue fitted.

" Get packed, boys," cried Drummond. " We lunch at the Angler's Rest. Gosh! I feel better. We've started. Beer, Tracey, old lad—pints of beer. And you and Dixon shall wish us good hunting."

THE beer arrived, and then Drummond raised his hand as for some solemn rite. Slowly he waved it to and fro, and once more did the words of his favourite refrain burst forth with vigour :—

" The more we are together—together—together. The more we are together the merrier we shall be."

" A new music-hall song? " I inquired, politely.

And all they did was to roar with laughter.

" When we start hunting, boys," he said, " that song shall be the war-cry. Don't forget—once for the rally, twice for danger."

I suppose it was foolish of me, but I really couldn't help it. There was something contagious about the spirits of this extraordinary gang which must have infected me.

" I must learn the tune," I said. " For if you'll allow me I should very much like to join you in whatever is coming."

They all stared at me, and then, a little doubtfully, at one another.

" Of course," I said, stiffly, " if you'd prefer I didn't."

" It isn't that," interrupted Drummond. " Look here, Dixon; if you're going to come in on this thing, you'd better be under no delusions. You got a taste last night of the sort of people we're going to be up against. I want you to understand quite clearly that if you do join us you'll be taking your life in your hands at most hours of the day and night. I mean it—quite literally. It's not going to be a question of merely solving little puzzles."

" I'll chance it," I answered. " As a matter of fact, I dislike most strongly the implication behind the phrase 'funny little man.' "

Once more the whole lot burst out laughing.

" Right," said Drummond. " That settles it. But don't say you weren't warned if you get your ear bitten badly."

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH I GET THE SECOND CLUE.

THE village of Drayminster is one of the beauty-spots of England. Somewhat out of the beaten track, it is as yet unspoiled by motor coaches and hordes of trippers. The river Dray meanders on its peaceful way parallel to the main street, and in the very centre of the village stands the Angler's Rest. A strip of grass separates it from the water's edge, and moored to two stakes a punt stretches out into the stream, from the end of which the energetic may fish for the wily roach and perch.

" Your lady friend," I said to Drummond, " has undoubtedly an artistic eye."

We were sitting on the lawn after lunch, and he grunted thoughtfully. The others had departed on a tour of exploration, and, save for the motionless figure of the landlord's son at the end of the punt, we were alone.

" If only I could be absolutely certain that we were right," he remarked. " That we aren't wasting our time sitting here."

" Unless the whole thing is a stupid hoax," I said, reassuringly, " I'm certain our solution was correct."

It was the inaction that chafed him, I could see. I think he had expected to find another clue waiting for us on our arrival. But there had been nothing, and gradually his mood of elation had left him. He had kept his eyes fixed so searchingly on an elderly parson and his daughter during lunch that the poor man had become quite hot and bothered. In fact, it wasn't until our host had assured him that the reverend gentleman had come to the hotel regularly for the last twenty years that he desisted.

" It's not a hoax," he said, doggedly. " So why the devil, if we're right, haven't we heard something more ? "

" Quite possibly that's all part of the game," I answered. " They may know that that is a method of rattling you."

He looked quite relieved at the suggestion.

" There's one thing we might do," I went on. " It may not be any good, but it can't do any harm. Let's find out if there are any houses in the neighbourhood that have recently changed hands. If they are hiding your wife, a house is the most likely place to do it in."

" Dixon," he said, " you're the bright boy all right. My brain at the moment is refusing to function altogether. Hi ! John —or whatever your name is—cease tormenting fish, and come here a moment."

Obediently the boy put down his rod and approached.

" Now, you know all the big houses in the neighbourhood, don't you ? "

The boy nodded his head.

" That's right, mister. There be the Old Manor—that be Squire Foley's. And there be Park House. That do belong to Sir James—but he be away now."

" Has there been any house sold round about here recently ? " I put in.

The boy scratched his head.

" There be Widow Maybury's," he said. " She did sell her little cottage, and be gone to live with her darter near Lewes."

" Who bought it ? " I cried.

" They do say he be a writer from Lunnon, or sommat fulish like that. He just comes occasional like."

" Is he here now ? " asked Drummond.

" Aye," said the boy. " He come last night. There was a young leddy with him."

I caught Drummond's eye, and it was blazing with excitement.

" They come in a motor-car," went on the boy.

" Where is the cottage ? " said Drummond.

" End o' village," he replied. " Lily Cottage, it do be called."

DRUMMOND had already risen to his feet, and the boy looked at him doubtfully.

" He be a terrible funny-tempered gentleman," he said. " He set about Luke Gurney with a stick, he did—two or three weeks ago. Had to pay Luke five pounds, he did, or old Gaffer Gurney would have had him up afore the beak."

" My lad," said Drummond, " there is half a crown. You may now resume your occupation of catching fish."

He turned to me. " Are you coming ? " he said. " Why—good Lord ! Phyllis may be actually there now."

" All right—I'll come," I said. " Only—cautious does it."

But for the moment Drummond was beyond caution. The thought that possibly his wife was within half a mile of him had sent him completely crazy, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that I restrained him from bursting straight into the house when we got there.

" We'll ask if it's for sale," he said, and then suddenly he gripped my arm like a vice.

" Look up at the top left-hand window," he muttered.

I did so, and got a momentary glimpse of the saturnine, furious face of a man glaring at us. Then like a flash it was gone.

" Dixon," he said, hoarsely, " we've done

it. She's in there. And I'm going through that house with a fine comb."

A little dubiously I followed him up the path. Nothing that I could have done would have stopped him, but even before he knocked on the door I had a shrewd suspicion that he was making a blazing error.

And a blazing error it proved. The door was flung open and the man we had seen peering at us through the window appeared.

"What the——," he began.

"Laddie," interrupted Drummond, firmly, "something tells me that you and I will never be friends. Nevertheless, I am going to honour your charming cottage with a call."

He extended a vast hand and the other man disappeared into the hat-rack—an unstable structure. Drummond disappeared upstairs. And the scene that followed beggared description. The hat-rack, in falling, had pinned the owner underneath. Moreover, as far as I could see, one of the metal pegs was running straight into the small of his back. Then came a shrill feminine scream from above, and Drummond appeared at the top of the stairs, looking pensive.

"I fear," he murmured, "that someone has blundered."

A rending crash from behind announced that the hat-rack was still in the picture, and we faded rapidly down the street.

"A complete stranger," he remarked. "With very little on. Most embarrassing."

A howl of rage from behind us announced that the battle of the hat-rack was over.

"Pretend," said Drummond, "that I'm not all there."

"Hi, you, sir!" came a shout, and we paused.

"You are addressing me, sir?" remarked Drummond, majestically, as the other approached.

"You scoundrel!" he spluttered. "How dare you force your way into my house?"

"My Prime Minister will raise the point at the next meeting of Parliament," said Drummond. "Do you ever hit yourself hard on the head with a heavy spanner? Hard and often? You must try it. It's so wonderful when you stop. The audience is terminated."

He turned on his heel and strode off down the street, whilst I touched my head significantly.

"Good God!" said the other. "Is he mad?"

"Touched," I murmured. "Result of shell-shock. He'll probably be quite all right in an hour or two, when he'll have completely forgotten the whole incident."

"But the cursed fellow ought to be locked up," he cried, angrily.

"His relatives don't want it to come to that if it can be avoided," I said. "I much regret the incident, sir—but . . ."

Drummond had suddenly returned, and was staring fixedly at his late victim.

He seized me by the arm and stalked off in the direction of the Angler's Rest, leaving the other standing speechless in the road.

"Did we put it across him?" he said when we were out of hearing.

"More or less," I answered. "He said you ought to be locked up."

"I really don't blame him," he conceded. "She was a pretty girl, too," he continued irrelevantly as we arrived at the hotel. "Very pretty."

DARRELL and Jerningham were both on the lawn, but the others had evidently not yet returned.

"Any luck?" they asked as we pulled up a couple of chairs.

"Darn all," said Drummond, moodily. "I pushed a bloke's face into a hat-rack, and contemplated a charming lady with very little on, but we never got the trace of a clue."

"But you don't imagine, do you, old boy," remarked Jerningham, "that Phylis is likely to be round about here? Because I don't."

"What's that?" said Drummond, blankly.

"This is but the beginning of the chase. And I don't think Mademoiselle Irma would have run the risk of bringing her to the place where all of us would certainly be, granted we solved the first clue. All we're going to get here is the second clue."

Darrell stretched out his legs and closed his eyes, and after a while I followed his example. The afternoon was drowsy, and it seemed only a moment afterwards that a hand was laid on my shoulder, and I sat up with a start.

The shadows had lengthened, and at first I saw no one. The landlord's son had ceased to fish, the chairs that the others had occupied were empty.

"You will, I am sure, excuse me," came a pleasant voice from over my shoulder, "but your snores are a little disconcerting to the sensitive ear."

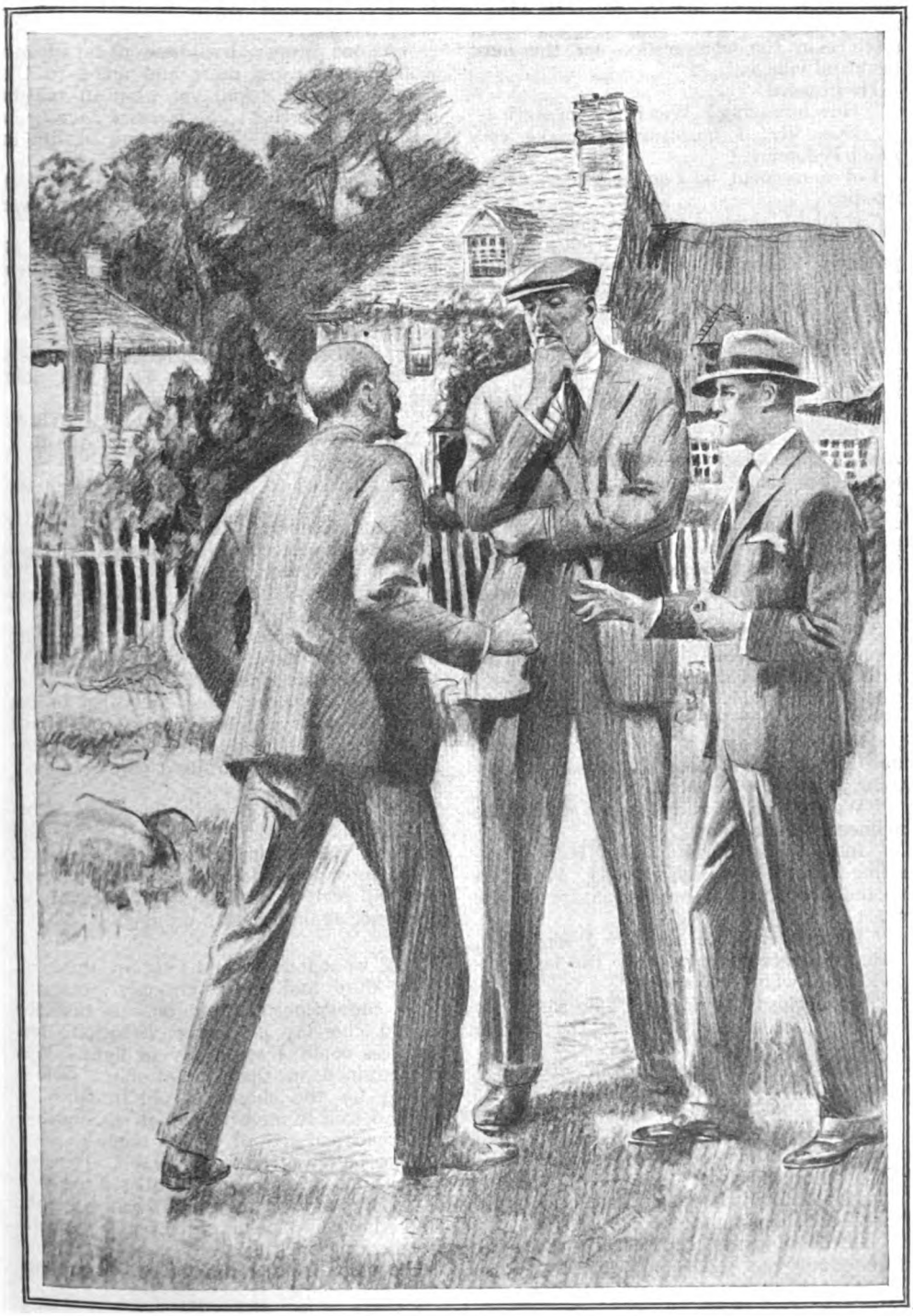
"I beg your pardon," I said, stiffly, as I rose.

He regarded me affably—a pleasant-faced little white-haired man.

"Don't mention it," he said. "I do to others as I would they should do to me. And I feared you might collect a crowd, who would misconstrue the reason of the uproar, in view of the proximity of the Angler's Rest."

He sat down in the seat recently occupied by Drummond.

"A charming village," he remarked.



"You scoundrel!" he spluttered. "How dare you force your way into my house?"

"A bit of old-world England, the like of which, I regret to say, is becoming all too rare. They tell me it was fifth—or was it sixth?—in the competition for the most beautiful village."

He frowned.

"How annoying! Was it fifth or sixth?"

"Does it," I murmured, "make very much difference?"

For a moment or two he stared at me fixedly.

"It might," he said, gravely, "make a lot."

Then he looked away, and I felt a sudden pricking feeling of excitement. Was he implying something? Was there a hidden meaning in his apparently harmless remark?

"Only, I should imagine, to the lucky inhabitants," I said, lightly. "For my own part I am content with it whatever place it occupied in the list of honour."

He nodded.

"Perhaps so. It is certainly very lovely. And the inn is most comfortable. I always feel that in such a setting as this the old-time English beverage of ale tastes doubly good—a point of view which was shared, I think, by a very large individual who was sitting in this chair half an hour or so ago."

"I know the man you mean," I answered. "He is a very prolific beer-drinker."

"He crooned some incantation which seemed to assist his digestion," he went on, with an amused smile. "You are all one party, I suppose?"

"As a matter of fact we are," I said, politely, restraining a desire to ask what business it was of his. If there was anything to be got—I'd get it.

"We are here," I added on the spur of the moment, "on a quest."

"Indeed," he murmured. "How interesting! And how mysterious! Would it be indiscreet to inquire the nature of the quest?"

"That I fear is a secret," I remarked. "But it concerns principally the large individual of whom you spoke."

"My curiosity is aroused," he said. "It sounds as if a lady should be at the bottom of it."

"A lady is at the bottom of it," I answered.

He shook his head with a whimsical smile.

"What it is to be young! I, alas! can only say with the poet, 'Sole—sitting by the shores of old romance.'"

Once again did he give me a peculiar direct stare before looking away.

"At the moment," I remarked, "the quotation eludes me."

"It may perhaps return in time," he smiled. "And prove of assistance."

"In what possible way can it prove of assistance?" I said, quickly.

"It is always an assistance to the mind when a forgotten tag is recalled," he remarked, easily.

"As one grows older," he went on after a while, "one turns more and more to the solace of books. And yet what in reality are words worth? '*Si jeunesse savait: si vieillesse pouvait.*' The doctrine of life in a nutshell, my friend."

Still I said nothing: why I know not, but the conviction was growing on me that there was a message underlying his remarks.

"Words may be worth a lot," I said at length, "if one fully understands their meaning."

For the third time he gave me a quick, penetrating stare.

"To do that it is necessary to use one's brain," he murmured. "You will join me in a little gin and vermouth?"

"Delighted," I said, perfunctorily. Then: "May I ask you a perfectly straight question, sir?"

He returned to his seat from ringing the bell.

"But certainly," he said. "Whether I give you a perfectly straight answer, however, is a different matter."

"Naturally," I agreed. "Do you know why we are here, or do you not?"

"You have already told me that you are in quest of a lady."

He raised his glass to his lips.

"*Votre santé, m'sieur*—and also to the success of your search. If any stray words of mine have assisted you, I shall be doubly rewarded for having aroused you from your slumbers."

He replaced his glass on the table.

"Exquisite, is it not—the gold and black of the colour scheme? But, alas! the air grows a little chilly *pour la vieillesse*. You will pardon me, I trust—if I leave you. And once again—good hunting."

HE went indoors and I sat on, thinking. More and more strongly was the conviction growing on me that the second clue lay in our conversation; less and less could I see a ray of light. Was it contained in that quotation: "Sole—sitting by the shores of old romance"? He had said it might prove of assistance—and then had passed off his remark.

Who had written it, anyway? It came back to me as a dimly remembered tag, but as to the author my mind was a blank. Had the well-known old French proverb any bearing on the case?

His voice from a window above me cut into my reverie.

"I feel sure that you are tormenting yourself over the author of my little quotation," he chuckled. "It has suddenly

occurred to me that his name was actually mentioned in our conversation."

The window closed, leaving me staring blankly at it. Mentioned in our conversation! No author's name had been mentioned: to that I could swear.

Once more I ran over it, trying to recall it word by word. It was maddening to think that I was now possibly in actual possession of the information we wanted, and yet that I couldn't get it.

I ordered another gin and vermouth: perhaps, after all, I had been mistaken. An old gentleman, in all probability with an impish delight in the mysterious, who was deliberately playing a little joke on me. And then the window above me opened again.

"Good-bye, my friend. I am sorry to say that I have to leave this charming spot. And I trust for all your sakes that your brain will prove equal to my little problem."

I got up quickly. Surely that remark clinched the matter. He was one of the others, and I'd make him tell me more. A Ford was standing by the door, and a minute or two later I saw him getting into it.

"Look here, sir," I said, "I must insist on your being more explicit. You *do* know why we are here; you *have* been giving me the second clue."

He raised his eyebrows.

"You have told me why you are here," he answered. "And as for the second clue, the phrase sounds most exciting. And as for me I have a train to catch. To the station, driver."

The car started, leaving me standing there blankly. And then he put his head out of the window.

"Good hunting."

I suppose Drummond would have pulled him out of the car by the scruff of the neck; I wasn't Drummond. I watched the car disappear up the road, then I went back to my neglected gin and vermouth, swearing under my breath.

"Who," I said to the landlord, who came out at that moment, "is the old gentleman who has just driven off?"

"He entered himself in the books, sir, as Mr. Johnson of London. More than that I can't tell you."

Evidently disposed for a chat he rambled on, whilst I pretended to listen. And suddenly—I don't know what the worthy man was talking about at the moment—I fired a question at him.

"Have you got any books of poetry in the hotel?"

It must have been a bit disconcerting, for he stared at me as if I had taken leave of my senses.

"I believe the missus has," he said, in an offended voice. "I don't hold with the stuff myself. I'll ask her."

He went indoors, to return in a few moments with the information that she had Longfellow, Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats.

"Wordsworth," I said. "Please ask her to lend me Wordsworth."

He again went indoors, and I sat there marvelling at my denseness. "'And yet what in reality are words worth?'"

At the time the phrasing had struck me as peculiar, a little pedantic. And there it had been sticking out right under my nose.

Mine host handed me the book with an air of hurt dignity, and retired once more indoors, whilst I started on my lengthy task. In couples the others came back looking moody and disconsolate, and disinclined for conversation. They took no notice of me, and I, for fear I might raise false hopes, said nothing.

DINNER came, and over the steak and kidney pie I found it.

"Lady of the Mere,
"Sole—sitting by the shores of old romance."

I stared at the page blankly. Lady of the Mere. What earthly good was that? Had all my time been wasted? Was the old man a harmless jester after all?

The landlord came up to our table, and I drew a bow at a venture.

"Tell me, landlord," I said, "is there in this neighbourhood any place called the Mere?"

He stared at me for a moment or two without speaking.

"There is," he answered at length, and his jovial expression had vanished. "May I ask why you want to know, sir?"

"Curiosity," I said, hardly able to keep the excitement out of my voice. "Is it a pond—or what?"

"It's a house," he said. "An old house. About three miles from here."

"Who is the owner?" I cried.

"Owner!" He gave a short laugh. "There ain't been no owner, sir, for nigh on ten years. And there ain't never likely to be."

"What's the matter with the place?"

"I bain't a superstitious man, gentlemen," he said, gravely, "but it would take more'n a bag of gold to get me across the threshold of the Mere—even by day. And by night I wouldn't go—not for all the money in the Bank of England."

"Haunted, is it?" I prompted.

"Maybe—maybe not," he answered. "There be grim things, sir, black things go on in that house. Ten years ago the owner, old Farmer Jesson, were murdered there.

A fierce man he was: used to keep the most awful savage dogs. And they do say that he found his young wife with a lad—a powerful-tempered boy. And they had a terrible quarrel, The lad, so the story goes—'e struck the old man and killed him after an awful struggle. And as he died he cursed the lad and his young wife. He cursed the house; he cursed everything he could think of. Certain it is that the lad and the lass disappeared. Folks do say they died where they stood, and then were mysteriously removed. As I say, I bain't superstitious, and I don't rightly hold with that story. But what I do know is that since then there be strange lights and noises that come from the old place—for I've seen 'em and heard 'em myself. And I do know that there come a young gentleman from London who heard the tales and didn't believe them. He went there one night, and they found him next day on the ground outside, lying on his back and staring at the sky—as mad as a hatter. No, no, gentlemen—take my advice and give the Mere a wide berth, or you'll regret it."

The others were staring at me curiously.

"Why this incursion into local superstition?" asked Darrell.

"No particular reason," I answered on the spur of the moment. "As I said, just idle curiosity."

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH WE COME TO THE MERE.

I REALLY don't know why I didn't tell them at once. Somehow or other the whole thing seemed so terribly thin—as I ran over it in my mind. And told second-hand it would have sounded even thinner. A tag from Wordsworth, the coincidence of a name. And that was positively all.

I felt that something more definite was wanted, and there seemed only one way of getting it. I would go there myself and reconnoitre.

I'd borrow a bicycle after dinner, and have a look round the place. Only three miles, mine host had said. I'd be back comfortably by eleven o'clock. And if I'd found nothing, I would not mention my conversation of before dinner.

The first thing to do was to get hold of a bicycle, and in that I was successful at once. The landlord's son would be only too pleased to lend me his, and after a few minutes it was brought round to the front door.

"Be you going far, mister," he said, "because there bain't too much oil in the lamp."

"I'm going to the Mere," I answered, as casually as possible. "Which is the way?"

The boy's jaw dropped, and he stared at me speechlessly.

"To the Mere!" he stammered at length. "But you can't go to the Mere at night. It bain't safe."

"Rot, my good boy," I said. "Anyway, I'll chance it. Now, which is the way?"

"Straight along the road," he answered, pointing up the street. "And when you get about two mile out of Drayminster, you'll find a turning going down to the right. Take that, and in about another half-mile or so you'll see the house in front of you."

He hesitated for a moment, then he burst out with a further warning.

"It ain't safe, sir: it be a terrible place at night."

"Light the lamp, my lad," I said. "Your bicycle will be quite safe, anyway."

"The lamp be lit, sir," said the boy. "But you be terribly foolish to go."

He turned away and slouched in at the back door, while I got ready to mount. Foolish or not, I was going, and the sooner I started the sooner I'd be back.

(To be continued.)

She Saw With Her Ears

By Owen Oliver

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

THE *Mexican Señora* carried a deal of cargo. Passengers were a side-line, and the fares were not high. That was why she took the Sterling Opera Company to South America. Sterling had more music than money. It was for cargo that the vessel called at Santa Fervida.

"It's a God-forsaken place," the mate told Sterling, "and therefore a godsend to a man who's logged a million miles of sea, and hasn't much left to put in his land log."

"Ah!" said Sterling. "You beat me in miles, but as for what we've logged! Ha, ha! Two nights here, eh? Could we give them a show and rake in a few shekels?"

"No theatre," the mate said. "*Cafés;* community singing, except a few girls; not chosen principally for their voices or virtues."

"I shall tell mine not to go inside *cafés*, unless some of the boys are with them," Sterling said. He was a paternal man in the forties, and tried to keep his young company in the way that he had always found too narrow.

"You tell the boys themselves to keep out of the 'Diavolo,'" the mate advised. "The cap. puts it out of bounds for our lads. It's a place where you can see more of life in a night than in a month at Port Said."

So Sterling forbade his company to visit the "Diavolo," and went there himself with the mate.

The *café* was a big, one-storeyed wooden structure, adjoining a little inn, which stood in a very large garden, full of flowers and trees and shrubs. The *café* had no windows. The sides opened upon verandas, and many-coloured creepers were trained along the inside walls as well as the outside. It was furnished materially with chairs and tables and a bar; masculinely with men who wore gaudy clothing, and several days' unshaven beard, and knives in their belts; femininely with women whose garments and cheeks and eyes were brighter than the flowers. Their manners—male and female—were not discreet. Some guitared and some danced and some coquetted—not too shamefacedly—and some gambled. All drank wine. Even Sterling and the mate did that.

"Don't take notice of any of the hussies," the mate advised. "They're the cheese and we're the mice, and their bravos are the mouse-traps. We're only safe—to the limited extent that we *are*—as spectators."

"Do we spectate entirely?" Sterling inquired, sadly.

"If we're wise."

"And are we?"

"That's the catch," the mate owned.

"We're wise enough to keep clear of the women," Sterling suggested, "but not wise enough to go away without a flutter at one of the tables? A good actor makes a bad spectator!"

"So," the mate admitted, "does a good sailor!"

"Suppose we toss for it? Heads spectate; tails speculate?"

The coin came down tails.

"Let's ask old Andreas to introduce us to the most respectable table where they play Banker, or something like it," the mate proposed; and they went up to the rat-like little proprietor, who spoke an English of his own.

"Respec'ble?" he said. "If you mean 'not cheat,' some does not. Too many see. If you mean trouble—none *here*. We are bound of promise and punish to the—the police, you say, eh? But after you leaf my premise—well! How do I know? If you

lose, perhaps all ri'; but if you take winnings, you come to me, and I see you out quiet way of back through house-garden; and *then* run you fast to town!"

"Righto!" the mate said. "Which table?"

"Well. The next? No! There is three bad men. In the alcove? No. Two play not fair; and two is ver' dangerous. In the corner is best. None cheat ver' much. Vedras, you look out after, if you win. The big man, with the yellow han'chief. He play for his wife, too. She is blind; the *señora* nex' him in mantilla. Most good of look, is she not, eh? An' of music. Ah! To hear her sing! You be ver' careful of her. She sees with her ears! If she show favour to you, it is excuse to him to make quarrel. See?"

"If I knock your elbow, take it as a sign to come away," the mate told Sterling. "I know their lingo—and their ways. If I give a double knock, get up at once, and put your hand in your pocket to the shooter."

Sterling only knew a few words of Spanish, though he often made out some of it through its likeness to Italian.

ANDREAS introduced them at the corner table, and they played for half an hour. They judged that the play was quite fair. The mate's winnings and losings about balanced. Sterling had a run of luck and won considerably. Vedras and his wife kept losing; and she kept smiling toward Sterling; listened whenever he spoke. Presently Vedras shifted his seat to take the bank; and his wife moved next to Sterling.

"Complimen', *señor*," she said, bowing gracefully, and looking charming. "I am frien' of your voice. I see with my ears. Your voice is of itself. I pick it out from t'ousand and t'ousands. Singer, eh? Taught in Italy, perhaps. *I* know."

The mate knocked against his elbow.

"Time we were off, old man," he said.

"Firs' you drink of me," the blind woman said, rubbing her arm against Sterling's. She poured him out a large glassful from her flask.

The mate tapped his elbow twice.

"As soon as you have drunk to the beautiful *señora*, we must go," he said.

Sterling drank, with very complimentary remarks in very bad Spanish; and was rising to depart, but the woman pulled him back.

"I mus' drink to my frien' of voice," she declared, in a pretty musical voice of her own. "I pick it out from the world any day."

The mate signed to Sterling to pour her a glassful from his flask. He gave his elbow a treble knock: almost dragged him away, when the second toast had been drunk with due compliments.

Vedras shouted roughly after them in Spanish.

"What did he say?" Sterling demanded.

"Said you'd no business to deny him his revenge, or something of that sort."

"I'm not going to be insulted by a blighted Spaniard. I——"

"Don't be a damned fool. The wine's got into your head."

"Um-m-m! It has rather. More in my legs."

He swayed.

"What? You didn't have much. I wonder if that woman doped you? Here's Andreas. Andreas, my friend has been winning. Get us out the back way sharp."

He knocked Sterling's elbow, and Sterling gave the old man a handful of the uncounted winnings in his pocket. This moved him to alacrity.

"This way," he said, "quick!" He took them through the house, into the great garden. "Mos' quick. Vedras have rose. He lose much, and his *señora*. You not love her hand. I see; but she *say* you do. Quick! Listen! You are safe on my premise. All have swore to me by many saints. But outside, you run."

"He can't," the mate growled, jerking his thumb towards Sterling, staggering along.

"Ah! Drink too much."

"I didn't," Sterling denied.

"One glass too much," the mate stated. "A glass from *her*."

He called the blind woman bad names.

"Ah-h-h-h!" muttered Andreas, understandingly. "Meant for the head, and go to the feet. It is so when we are older. Best sit in my garden till the legs is well; hour, perhaps. Vedras not come there. He do nothing on my own premise; but you hide his sight. I tell him you gone."

Andreas's garden was on a little hill, a good ten feet above the roadway. They sat down behind some bushes, which covered them from the sunken road. They could see it if they parted the leafy branches. The mate kept peering; but Sterling, stretched out upon the ground in drowsy abandonment, gazed admiringly at the flowery gardens in the faint moonlight, sniffed, looked up at the stars twinkling in the grey-blue velvet sky, and nodded approval of them; drank in the sweet air, just cooling to comfort.

"It's a lovely night for it," he remarked.

"Lovely night to be knifed!" the mate muttered. "Wine's in your head."

"Legs. Drugged, of course."

"Yes." The mate parted the leaves

again, drew a deep breath. "No one there yet."

"I thought it might be doped, but I couldn't refuse," Sterling stated, apologetically. "It meant an insult to her; knife duel with husband, eh?"

"That's it. I'm not blaming you, old man. I wonder why the lovely nights grow where there are only devils who don't appreciate them? I'll have another look. God! Here they are. Don't speak above a whisper, Sterling. She sees with her ears, remember. He's trying the edge of his knife. She's leaning forward like an animal listening; could almost fancy her ears stood out straight. They're waiting for us to come out. Look here! We could shoot him, of course; but we'd be nabbed. I'd rather be knifed than throttled. I'll go in to Andreas, and see if he can get us out some other way. Vedras won't come in here. They're under some sort of agreement with the police not to kill on Andreas's 'premise,' as he calls it. You keep quiet, though, or she'll hear you."

He crawled away, and Sterling lay still on his back. The stars blinked at them. He almost forgot the murderous couple in the road below, till presently he heard some whispers. He began to wonder whether they *would* respect Andreas's premises, and thought he'd like to see what they were doing. He shuffled a little nearer to the bush; parted it. They were sitting upon a mound at the roadside. The man was feeling the edge of his knife. The woman had her head stuck out—like an animal's, as the mate had told him—listening. She touched the man on the arm and pointed unerringly to where the sound of parting the branches had come from; said something in Spanish. Sterling expected it was, "He is *there!*" He released the parted twigs hastily and made a rustling sound. She said whatever it was again. He heard, though he couldn't see them now.

Then *he* began to see with his ears; heard scratching, scrambling noises, the fall of loose earth and stones; pictured the big man climbing the embankment, with his knife in his mouth; pictured, before the event, his coming to him, and himself on his back again, staring up at the stars—not seeing them. "And it's such a perfect night," he thought, stupidly.

The bushes immediately in front of him swayed violently. He rose to his feet and took out his revolver; tried to turn and run, but only tottered. So he faced the bushes again. Coming through them he saw an animal-man, lips drawn back and showing his teeth; and suddenly the moonlight glinted from steel, and the man-animal drew back for a spring. Sterling never knew whether his will or his nerves pulled the trigger, but his revolver fired. Vedras fell on the bushes, rolled over and lay on his back, staring up at the heavens, but not seeing. Down in the sunken road a woman shrieked. Then Sterling heard earth and stones falling rapidly, and saw her with his ears climbing the embankment!

THE mate and Andreas ran towards him from the house; but the woman was upon him first, a ghastly-faced ghost in the moonlight. She had a knife. He felt nerveless; and he didn't see how he could shoot a woman anyway. She could easily have stabbed him, but she went to her husband first, knelt down beside him, listened, felt, sniffed. And the mate had him by the arm.

"For the love of God, run!" he said, and hauled him along.

The woman rose with a choking sound and ran unerringly after Sterling. She had a knife in each hand now, her husband's and her own. She moved faster than the mate could pull Sterling along; but the old landlord seized her from behind, and pinioned her arms to her side. She screamed and screamed for help.

"The cowshed," the mate muttered. "Andreas's son is going to hide us till you find your feet."

"She'll bring the mob on us," Sterling said, finding some of himself. "*You* get off, old man. You can't save me. Save yourself."

"Rot," the mate snapped. "We're out together and we'll go home together—if we go. They aren't keen on finding you. Andreas doesn't want trouble on the 'premise,' and he has a hold over the blighters. Here we are."

He pushed Sterling toward the shed. A very cool, tall young man pulled him inside, helped him to a milking-stool, gave him some water.

"Drink a lot," he said, in excellent English. "It will wash down the dope."

Sterling drank; sat there listening to the shuffle of the cows and the shouts outside.

"They went down *there*," old Andreas cried; "to the shore."

"He lies," the woman shrieked. "They went to the cowshed. I heard them."

The tall young man stepped to the door of the shed, laughing and rolling a cigarette; declared that she was mad, and no one had come in the shed.

"Let *me* search it," the woman shrieked, "with my knife."

They spoke in Spanish, but the mate muttered translations when Sterling didn't understand.

"We could go up in the loft and pull the

Suddenly the moonlight glinted from steel, and the man-animal drew back for a spring.

ladder after us," the mate proposed to Andreas's son. "She couldn't hear that there was a loft."

"No time," the young man pronounced, lighting his cigarette placidly. "The police will be here soon. You must get off. The women are taking her away. They're putting Vedras in the road. It didn't happen on *our* premises, you understand, if there's any trouble. It depends on this gentleman's legs. Can you walk now?"

Sterling rose, and found that he had recovered some leg-power. The mate and the young man helped him at first, but he was soon able to walk fairly well alone. They crept through some neighbouring gardens into a quiet lane, and then into a road in a respectable residential district. Andreas's son left them there. Sterling gave him his uncounted winnings, and the big youth, after thanking him, gave him a word of advice.

"Stay on your ship," he said. "The woman knows your voice, your step, your cough, perhaps even your breath; or something of you that we do not know at all, that you do not know yourself. No one else will identify you."

"A very intelligent young man," Sterling muttered as they went off.

"Andreas had him educated for a padre," the mate said; "but a black-eyed Susan re-converted him to the laity."

Then they went on silently for a good while.

"We ought to have stayed as spectators," Sterling muttered presently.

"Of course," the mate agreed; "but we wouldn't like to be that sort of man! You'll want some excuse for staying aboard. Touch of malaria, eh?"

"Expect I've caught it," Sterling grunted. "I'll never forget the stink of the cowshed. When one sense is out of action, the others get keener, eh?"

'Yes. 'Tisn't only that. You've a very

noticeable voice ; speak like you sing. I'd know it anywhere myself. Best not talk in the street."

So Sterling said no more till they were aboard.

"I'll come to your cabin and have a peg," he proposed at the top of the gangway. "Someone might notice if we shook hands out here."

In the cabin they shook hands and had the peg.

"Out of the worst hole I was ever in," Sterling remarked.

"Hole all right," the mate agreed. "I suppose you're out—unless you ever run across that woman."

"If I do I'll be dumb," Sterling declared. "Ugh! I'll never forget it, especially the smell of that shed. Don't croak. I'm all right. I shall sleep the sleep of the just—'just reprieved,' eh? There's one thing I'll like to remember about it, old man—you! *Good* night."

STERLING had a cabin with his young principal bass. It was his habit to sit up in his berth while the boy shaved, and sing over a few scales for the good of his voice. He wanted to be very usual the next day, so he followed his custom, till the mate burst in.

"For God's sake shut up!" he snapped. "You'll have an opportunity for showing off your unique voice soon enough."

He frowned at the young bass's back and made signs.

"Saw you in the glass," the boy said. He turned to them, wiping his razor. "Want me to go?"

"Doesn't matter," the mate said. "I'm only saying what Sterling will soon tell you, in case any of you fellows are concerned. The Judiciary has been aboard to see the cap. It seems that last night two English chaps went to the 'Diavolo.' They were followed up when they left. One of them shot a blighter named Vedras. No doubt the brute went after him to pick a quarrel and knife him and take the money he'd won, and the chap shot him in self-defence ; but that will be hard to prove. No one actually saw it happen. The bravo's woman heard. She's blind. They say she sees with her ears. She declares she'd know the chap's voice any time and anywhere, and she says from something she heard she believes him to be someone aboard a ship in port, a singer."

"The devil!" cried Sterling. "Well?"

"The Judiciary himself isn't keen on making trouble, seems to think the place is well rid of the blighter ; but the woman has powerful influence. Some local don's picking her up, apparently. Damned good-looking, if she *is* blind."

"Oh!" said the young bass. "*You've* seen her, eh?" He looked from the mate to his chief, whistled, sat down beside him on his berth, slipped his arm through his.

"Yes, Jack," Sterling said. "I did it. The woman gave me drugged wine, so that I couldn't run off with my winnings ; and he came at me with a knife, while Johnson was away arranging our escape. What's her game, Johnson?"

"The old beak wants the ship mustered at noon. Everyone who went ashore last night is to speak as the woman passes along, to see if she recognizes the voice."

"She said she'd know mine out of thousands of thousands," Sterling remarked.

"Anyone would," the young *basso* muttered. "I'd best swear you stayed aboard, eh?"

"The captain won't agree to perjury," the mate said ; "not if he knows it ; and knows that other people know he knows. He *doesn't* know that I went ashore, and takes care not to ask ; but everybody knows he knows that Sterling went. He asked for him several times, for a bit of music. The best he'll agree to is this. The woman can't see. The Judiciary doesn't want to see. The police are willing to be blind to a reasonable extent for a reasonable price, say a hundred pounds English, eh?" Sterling nodded. "Then the idea is this : Sterling toes the line ; but someone who didn't go ashore last night—sat on a bridge with a young lady, eh?"—the young bass nodded—"he stands just behind Sterling. When the blind woman comes to them, Sterling's mouth opens and shuts, for the benefit of the onlookers ; but the speech comes from the bystander. Eh?"

"Right," said the young bass ; "but why can't he be queer and stay in his cabin? Easier to work it in there, and no one to notice."

"Give her reason to concentrate on him," the mate objected ; "and she's got about a dozen senses to make up for sight. We can square everybody who'll be near him easy enough. His best chance is to pass in the ruck. Ought to do it easy."

IT didn't appear so easy to Sterling when the time came. He seemed to feel that everybody was looking at him, except the Judiciary and the police. They seemed to be carefully seeing nobody. A fat, elderly man, who, he understood, was to become the blind woman's "protector," seemed to scrutinize the proceedings with especial keenness.

There were about thirty men, crew and passengers, along the promenade deck in a

She turned at the gangway and

line. He was thirteenth, and he didn't like the number. The local authorities and the captain stood in front of the suspects, by the handrail. The unsuspected passengers and ship's officers stood behind them, against the deck saloon. The blind woman came along the line, stopped in front of each man in turn, and spoke to him ; asked a few questions in fairly good English, listened with clasped hands, shook her head, and passed on. At last she came to Sterling. She gave a slight start, stretched out her hand and touched him, which she had done to no one before. He had thought she might do that, and wore different clothes. She sniffed ; but he had borrowed scent from the *prima donna*. She frowned, as if in deep thought.

" Do you know me ? " she asked.

Sterling's lips moved, but it was the young bass whose deep voice answered over his shoulder.

" I wish I had that honour, madam."

" Ah ! " she said, and turned to go on ; turned back again, and clenched her hands in fierce concentration.

" Let me hold your hand," she said ; and now the Judiciary and the police looked carefully away from Sterling, and the fat man stared at him. The *prima donna* laughed suddenly. She was a clever girl and thought it would destroy the concen-

screamed something in Spanish.

tration. Perhaps it did. Sterling kissed her afterwards, on that theory.

"It is not to laugh, you woman!" the blind woman screamed furiously.

The young bass poked Sterling in the back. It was the signal to move his lips.

"She likes to do that herself, *señora*," he said on a deep note; "but if she will permit me——"

Sterling gave her his hand. The young bass poked him hard.

"I kiss your hand, *señora!*" he said.

Sterling lowered his head and raised the hand; touched it with his lips. The boy laughed on a deep note.

"Wrong!" said the blind woman, and passed on to the next man in the line, but her fat "protector" still looked hard at Sterling, smiling a trifle.

"He's spotted me," Sterling whispered to the mate, when the line broke up.

"Looks like it," the mate muttered. "He wants to speak to you. Speak on your lowest note, whatever it is. Here he comes."

The fat man bowed to Sterling, pushed a gold cigarette case into his hand, spoke in Spanish.

"He says," the mate translated, "that you did him a service last night. Vedras was likely to have knifed *him!*"

Sterling bowed his thanks, asked the mate to say that he should always value the gift. The fat man bowed again, and spoke again, this time at some length.

"He says," the mate translated, "that you must beware of the woman, even after you leave here. She will pursue you, get the money to do it from fools like himself."

"As she doesn't know me——"

"She knows that you are a singer. She's 'music mad,' he says; has had some musical training herself, lived with a musician before she went off with Vedras. She detects the trained voice, even in your speech. She feels sure that her bravo—he wasn't her husband, our friend says—was killed by someone of your company. So she'll follow that: come to its performances, and listen, and——"

The fat man held up his hand for silence, pointed to the woman approaching them, bowed again and went to her, took her arm and led her to the gangway. She turned there and screamed something in Spanish.

"Eh?" Sterling muttered.

"She says that some day she will see you with her ears," the mate told him, "and denounce you to the Law."

Sterling wiped his forehead. He pictured himself singing one of his best airs, and the blind woman rising in the audience and pointing to him. He couldn't get the picture out of his mind for some time.

However, he was not a broody man, and when the ship sailed away he left his apprehensions at Santa Fervida, as it became a red—white—green patch upon the horizon.

"The real moral," he told the company, "is that you'd best listen to 'the old man' when he tells you to keep out of places."

"How about 'the old man'?" the leading contralto inquired.

"Oh, he'll probably be hanged, garrotted, or whatever they do to 'em out here; and that will drive the moral home. We must try to spot her any time she's in the seats. Then Winbury goes on for me."

Winbury was the second tenor, and understudied Sterling's parts.

However, they toured for a month and saw nothing of the blind woman. They barely made ends meet at the smaller places. They found that the standard of performance demanded was high. The last two touring companies had been competent Italians. The newspaper reviews compared them unfavourably with these; complained that the orchestra and chorus (mostly recruited locally) were poor, and the principals only passable, except Sterling. *He* had, they said, that rare thing, a natural tenor voice, and, though his "production" fell a trifle short of the best Italian method, he atoned for this by his artistry, and the fervid, unforced feeling which he put into his singing and acting.

WHEN Sterling apologized to the company for some arrears of wages, the young bass quoted the reports.

"They're just enough," he owned, "except to Lucy. *She's* good."

He meant the *prima donna*. They had become engaged on the voyage.

"You've got to think me a peach Melba," she said. "Other people haven't. I can't even manage to think it myself. The honest fact is nobody comes to our shows except to hear 'daddy.' If he stood out, we'd draw nothing at all."

That was precisely why Sterling refused to stand out, after he met the mate (now homeward bound) at Buenos Ayres, where they hoped to take enough to set things right.

"I saw that blind devil this morning," the mate reported. "I've been chasing you ever since to warn you."

"Saw her here!" cried Sterling. He whistled.

"Here; and just outside the Opera House. She was dressed up to the nines, with another fat man, protector type! He was reading the 'casts' to her from your bills; and they spoke to a Johnny who looked damnably like a policeman in plain clothes. You'd best ship with us for home."

"Bust the company," Sterling said.

"Better bust your pocket than your back," the mate grunted.

'I'm not thinking of *my* pocket. There's the boys and girls. They haven't return tickets even. We haven't been doing too well, old man. Got to make up for it here."

"Umph! Why can't your understudy carry on?"

"I'll show you a few reports, old chap. They say that people only come to hear me. Solid fact; not professional vanity, though I've enough. Read this! And this. You see, I very nearly got into the top class. Might have done if I'd been steadier; spectated more and speculated less, eh? As it is, I've a bit of a name; been in international opera. I'm a big man in the second class, anyway. My people—they're darned fine people, but as opera singers, third class, or fourth. If I stand out I wreck the show and them. After all, you can't often spot a speaker from his singing."

"*I* can't; but that blighted woman sees with her ears, you know."

"Well, I've got to chance it."

"If she spots you and you're run in, your company will be no better off than if you ran home."

"Oh! I don't know! Good advert! People might go in the hope of seeing another 'spot.' They wouldn't suspect that I make my boys and girls behave, the young devils! Don't mention this to any of them, Johnson. They'd try to keep me from going on."

"Common sense!"

"I'd rather have man sense! Don't try to pose as a common-sensible bounder—you! You know you'd take the risk in my place."

"Never been in it. I've often wondered how much of a man I am!"

"I knighted you mentally in the cowshed—I'd smell that shed out from a thousand. I expect her ears are like that. Staying here long?"

"We sail at seven to-night."

"Pity. If you could come to-night you might log a new thing; a Chinese box of play within play. We're doing 'I Pagliacci'—'The Players.' Know the opera?"

"Music-halls are more in my line."

"Heathen! It's about some strolling players who perform twopenny things upon their ramshackle little stage. The fury and fright of the principals are supposed to be real, because they are playing over the same drama that they're playing on the main stage in their lives, and so the stab becomes a real one. You'd see a really real stab waiting outside on the true stage of life, eh? Say in the front row of the stalls. And the actor knowing it. Always supposing that she's there, and spots me."

"She'll spot you, if she's there. If I were a praying man I'd pray to keep her away!"

"No harm in trying it."

THE mate did try it in a dumb way; but she was there, in the right-hand stage-box, well dressed and with a well-dressed gentleman, presumably a new "protector." Sterling saw her directly he went on as the savage leader of the travelling players with a jealous eye upon his flirtatious wife. He noticed her start and become alert directly he sang his first note. She turned to her companion and whispered; doubtless, "What is his name?" She leaned forward with her elbows on the front ledge of the box, and her hands—there were many jewelled rings on them now—holding her ears out toward the stage. Her sightless eyes always looked straight at him, even when he was not singing, and followed him about, as if she could pick out his footsteps from the rest. He trod stealthily, but it made no difference. He wiped his forehead when he went off.

"Bit nervy to-night, old chief, aren't you?" the young bass suggested. "Cheer up! Jolly good house; and they took the Prologue pretty well, eh? And your number went A1. The old voice is itself, just itself. No one who hears it forgets it."

"Ah!" said Sterling. "*You* forget that you're engaged to Lucy and feel Emperor of the Universe. You're the despised clown with his hump at the moment. Don't forget that and straighten up again. You *did*, you young devil! Above all, forget the darned audience. I wish to God I could!"

"Chief! You don't mean——"

"That's your cue," Sterling said, and gave him a push. He sat with his cheek on his hand. Silvio—his leading baritone—came and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Chief! She's in the right-hand stage-box; the blind woman."

"Saw her."

"Hadn't you better be indisposed and let Winbury take on? Bess can do Harlequin. Prefer it done by a contralto myself."

"What's the use?" Sterling shrugged his shoulders. "She's spotted me; first note!"

"Then make a bolt. You might catch the *Mexican Señora*."

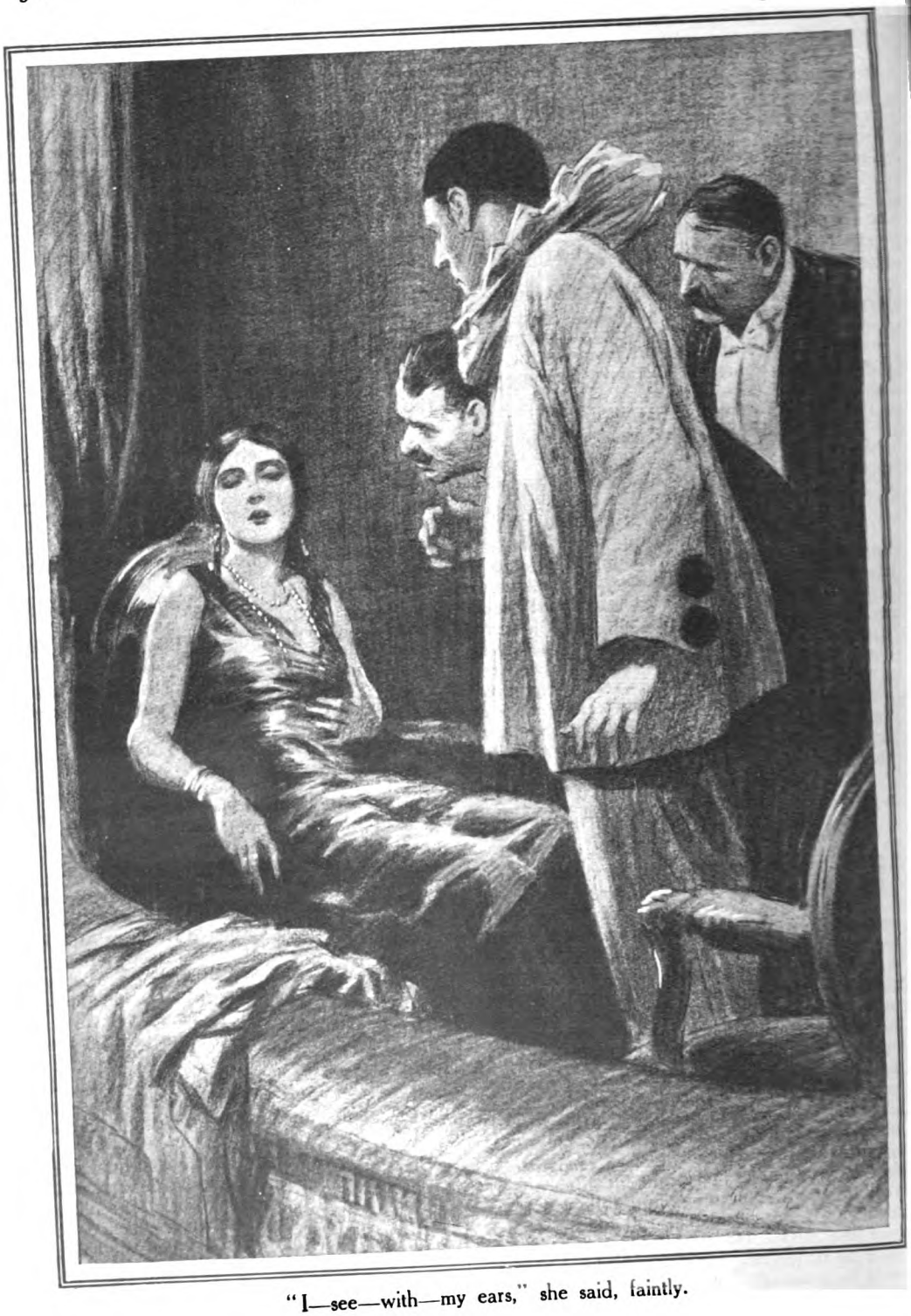
"Sailed an hour ago. Johnson warned me that she'd be here, and wanted me to go; till I told him it would strand you all. He said no more then. Don't you! On you go."

The young bass came off; removed his coat and the hump.

"She seems half asleep," he remarked. "Perhaps she hasn't identified you. If you let Winbury do the rest——"

"My dear boy, she was 'wide' enough when I was on. I've thought it all out. The best chance for everybody is to see it through; stick to it that I'm not the chap. She *mayn't* be able to prove it. I'm afraid she will. Anyhow, it was in self-defence. If there's any justice out here—probably isn't—I'd rather be scragged than do semi-tropical penal servitude. There's one thing. If this is my last turn on the boards, it's going to be a worthy one! Feel your part. That's what I always tell you. God! I ought to feel myself the man who has to sing when his heart is breaking! Here goes!"

He went on, as the betrayed husband seeing his wife's unknown lover depart, and unable to catch or identify him. The blind woman seemed like a statue awakened to life directly he came. She gripped the ledge of the box and leaned over it toward him; gritted her teeth during his scene with his faithless wife, laughed a little when Harlequin held him back from harming her, snarled at



"I—see—with—my ears," she said, faintly.

him with parted lips showing her beautiful teeth when he started his great song, the cry of a man who has to "clown" with burning hell inside him.

Sterling holds and always will hold that his singing of "On with the Motley" that night was the best performance of his creditable musical career. The audience was greatly moved; and the blind woman was deeply affected, though evidently against her will. Her expression changed as he sang. Her mouth closed; and presently the sightless eyes. Her fingers on the red plush ledge twitched and twitched. A tear came down each cheek presently. A bad woman, a gambler's decoy, an assassin's assistant, a revengeful fiend, but one who loved music as only a few fortunate—and unfortunate—people can. He felt that, as if he had an extra sixth sense. She cared for music even as he did; and he had sometimes thought there was no one who did that. He seemed to say by the sixth sense, "*You* understand." And then he sang *to her*, to the end—"*Laugh, Punchinello! Laugh for the grief that is breaking your heart!*"

He sank upon the steps of the players' little stage within the stage, and buried his face in his hands, till the curtain went down. He peeped through his fingers, but there were real tears in his eyes, and he could not see the blind woman.

"Even *she* applauded for a bit," the *prima donna* told him, "till she stopped herself. Then she looked murderous, ghastly and murderous; held her side as if she felt ill. Oh, chief, do go away! Never mind us, dear old chief! You've been like a 'dad' to me, to us all. This time you do as we tell you."

"You do what 'dad' tells you," he said; "not what he does. It was in self-defence, mind you. Rather a triumph to have got a clap from *her*, eh?"

"Yes, yes; but you mayn't get a fair trial out here. They'll be prejudiced. Do go!"

"Don't be foolish, my dear. No doubt there's a 'cop' waiting to nab me directly I try to pass out. So I may as well go through. It will be some satisfaction to have given my best show on the last occasion. You cry like that on the stage, Lucy, and help by playing up to me. I want to make her *cry!*"

But the blind woman seemed less emotional when he went on again. She looked like a stern pale statue, the paler by contrast with a bunch of red roses which she held. However, she laid them on the ledge toward the end when he sang the passionate song of his great love and its betrayal; gripped the ledge fiercely when he took up the knife and began to demand to know the betrayer, to take his revenge.

"*His name!... His name!*"

"*Never!*" screamed the *prima donna*.

"*His name!*" he repeated, frenziedly.

And then there was a faint cry from the right-hand stage-box, and the blind woman rose to her feet.

Sterling laughed a maniacal laugh that had never been in the play before. He stabbed Nedda, and then her lover who rushed to her cry. And then he sank with his face in his hands.

"The—comedy—is—ended!" he said, brokenly. So the libretto goes. He threw out his arms and looked up as if to Heaven to justify him; but really it was to see if he had won applause from the blind woman —*and she was pelting him with roses!*

Suddenly she put both hands to her side and cried a sharp cry, staggered.

WHEN Sterling had been before the curtain for the fourth time, an attendant came to him.

"The lady in Box A wants to see you," he stated. "She is dying. It is her heart. The excitement of the play was too much for it, the doctor says."

Sterling went to her in his grease-paint and motley. They gave her some brandy, and she revived for a moment, looked at him, muttered something.

"I think," her "protector" said, huskily, "she wants to thank you."

"She is trying to tell us that she has discovered the man she was seeking," said a man who was obviously a detective. He bent over her. "His name?" he asked.

"Never!" she gasped. She fixed her blind eyes on Sterling, tried to stretch out her hand to him.

"I—see—with—my ears," she said, faintly.

He knelt down beside the chair and kissed her hand. Then he took it in both his, held it tightly, lovingly. Presently a man, who seemed to be a doctor, touched him on the shoulder.

"She is gone," he whispered.

Sterling kissed her hand again.

"We both saw with our ears," he said.

"Am I Right, Sir?"

An Interview With

"DATAS"

THE MEMORY MAN

By
Leonard Crocombe

Illustrated by
LUNT ROBERTS

"DATAS, the Memory Man"—we all know of him; many of us have heard his astonishing performance from the stage. He is a walking encyclopædia, a living almanack, a vocal dictionary of dates. For about twenty-seven years he has been answering—verbally, promptly—such questions as:—

When did Lord Beaconsfield make his maiden speech?

When was an observatory built on top of St. Paul's Cathedral?

When was Aristotle born?

When did Cecil Rhodes visit Holloway Jail?

When was Kensal Green Cemetery consecrated?

To any questions of this type he will reply correctly, without hesitation, usually giving many details in full, in addition to accurate dates, places, times, and names.

What manner of man is he, then, this "Datas"?

His name is W. J. M. Bottle, now aged fifty-three, and he lives on Brixton Hill. In appearance and in conversation he is just an ordinary, genial working man. He has little more education than the average labourer, is scarcely more articulate, writes in no better style; he is by no means well-read nor in any degree cultured.

("From the first I went before them as an uneducated working man, sir, and as far as education goes, in the ordinary sense of the word, as such I still appear before them.")

"Datas"
as he appears on the stage.

He has visited many lands during his extensive circus and music-hall tours, but his recollections of people and places — judged apart from his phenomenal memory for dates, names, and other details—are those that the average fairly intelligent labourer would gather, given the same opportunities for travel: stories of local crimes, executions, statues, prize-fights, sporting events, cemeteries, food, drinks, and the usual commonplaces of every-day existence, with a marked relish for the gruesome.

A few random extracts from our talk will sketch the type :—

"When I first visited Ireland I had two special interviews with the noted Fitz-Harris, alias 'Skin-the-Goat,' and he related to me in all its details the terrible story of the Phœnix Park murders on May 6th, 1882, when, you will remember, Mr. Burke and Lord Cavendish were murdered. Soon both gentlemen were stabbed in the mouth with double-bladed knives——"

"Datas"

photographed in the retort house of the Crystal Palace Gas Works.

Of his first journey to America :—

"So I left Liverpool on the White Star *Majestic* on June 8th, and arrived in New York Harbour on June 15th, and was an eye-witness of the terrible burning of the *General Slocum* disaster, when over eleven hundred lives were lost. I opened in New York on Monday, June 20th."

Of his first visit to Australia :—

"I received an offer to tour Australia with a circus for twelve months, so I left Liverpool on the White Star *Suevic*, arriving at Melbourne in forty-four days, *viâ* the Cape. I joined the circus at a place called Wangarratta, a town made famous by the Kelly gang of bush-rangers, of whom I met some of the descendants, and I found out that they were brave men and were driven to do what they did through a sister's honour.

"I had an opportunity of looking all around Melbourne. I saw the jail where Ned Kelly and Deeming were hanged. Ned Kelly was hanged on Thursday, November 11th, 1880, at eight o'clock in the morning, at Melbourne, for a murder committed by the Kelly gang on June 27th, 1880. Deeming was hanged on May 23rd, 1892.

"We went on to Southern Cross, where Deeming was arrested for murder of his wife and family and burying them in cement on August 5th, 1891, at a place called Windsor, a suburb of Melbourne. He had previously murdered his wife at Rainhill, near Liverpool; eventually he was hanged at Swanston Street Jail, opposite to where I stayed in Melbourne.

"Cape Town is a nice place. I was sorry to leave it. I visited the place where Cecil Rhodes died and I brought home a picture of his grave."

Of his second visit to Australia :—

"I visited Ben Hall's grave at a place called Forbes in N.S.W. He had thirty-seven bullets put in him and his body is buried in a field with a fence round it with the words 'Ben Hall, May 5th, 1865.'

"I had an interview with the last known man-eater, or, in other words, a cannibal. I have his photo."

No power of expression, no colourful impressions, no articulate descriptions of places visited, but—the memory for dates, the accumulation of thousands upon thousands of facts and figures—that memory makes one gasp!

What, then, is his secret? How is it that Mr. Bottle of Brixton Hill—stolid, untutored, phlegmatic, unimaginative, roast-beef-and-boiled working man that he is—has been almost world-famous for a quarter of a century as "Datas, the World's Greatest Memory Man"? How has he done it?

He doesn't know! He states proudly that he knows nothing of mnemonics.

Let me give his life story, much as he told it to me :—

"I was born on July 20th, 1875, at Newnham, Kent, where my father kept a small shoemaker's shop. A few years later we moved to Penge, my father having secured a situation in the gas works at Lower Sydenham. I was a delicate boy, sir, and at six was thought to have little chance of reaching manhood. My parents had a family of eleven to bring up.

"I was only just able to read by the time I left school, at eleven, but my mind was even then a storehouse of many curiously-mixed facts and dates. My memory was not phenomenal as a child, although it was more strongly developed than the average. I mean I was never looked on as an infant prodigy. Being a delicate and backward boy, and not being forced to attend school regularly, I felt time hang heavily on my hands and got into the habit of committing things to memory for the occupation of being able to repeat them afterwards at leisure. That habit began when I was about

six. I remember that at about that age I found pleasure in slowly spelling out the names of shopkeepers and running them over in my mind. I soon found that when I had once learned them I never forgot them, and then it became my only form of recreation or study, though I call it both, sir. I was not like other boys. I took no part in games and so had no friends.

"WELL, sir, from memorizing shopkeepers' names, I got to cabbies' and policemen's numbers, and then the newspapers. I soon mastered details of various regiments, ships, naval stations, sporting events, crimes, and so on. Paper in hand, I would sit for hours on a little stool in a cosy corner by the fire, and, my head resting against the chimneypiece, I would concentrate all my attention on the facts I wished to learn. My parents sometimes thought I would go out of my mind with my absorbing study. But instead of unhinging my little mind, I slowly but surely stocked it with facts—facts that at any time afterwards I could give out with the greatest ease and assurance of their being correct. Well, sir, I——"

"When and where did Æschylus die?"

"455 B.C. at Gela in Sicily. Am I right, sir?"

"I hope so."

"Well, sir, I soon exhausted the newspapers, and in some way, I forget——"

"Ah!"

"I forget how, but I got hold of a copy of Tussaud's calendar of events. How I gloated over it! The famous names in it, many of which I could not pronounce, whetted my appetite for facts of history, geography, and adventure. I obtained a copy of 'British Land and Sea Battles,' and, later, various histories and text-books, until I wonder my little head didn't split. But I don't remember ever having a headache. Memorizing seemed to agree with me.

"Well, sir, as I have said, I had only learnt to read at the school at Penge, which I attended irregularly, by the time I was eleven. We moved to Forest Hill then and I was at once put out to work. I became a newsboy, then a parcel boy at Lordship Lane Station, and——"

"In what year was the first Act of Parliament for a railway passed?"

"1801. Am I right, sir?"

"I expect so."

"——and at fifteen I became a van-boy. Then I became errand-boy to butchers, bakers, grocers, and others in turn, until at sixteen I got a job in the retort house of the Crystal Palace Gas Works. That was on November 6th, 1891—exactly twenty-two years after Blackfriars Bridge and Holborn Viaduct were opened, you will remember, sir."

"I will not. However——"

"Later I was made a boiler-boy, and on April 24th, 1895, I was promoted to engine-driver. From that date to the following November I did a spell of seven months nightwork all by myself. Then I was sent to the blacksmiths' shop, as——"

"Who was the original of 'The Village Blacksmith,' and when was the poem published?"

"Said to have been Henry Francis Moore, Massachusetts; 1842. Am I right, sir?"

"I think it quite likely."

"I was employed as a striker and handy man. My wages were twenty-four shillings a week, and sometimes I had to put in thirty-six hours without a break.

"At last, sir, the great change came, in a most unexpected way. On June 16th, 1901, after I had been working on the night shift from ten till six, I had slept till midday, then had my dinner and took a stroll to the Crystal Palace. There——"

"Who designed that, and when was it opened?"

"Sir Joseph Paxton. It was opened by Queen Victoria on June 10th, 1854. Am I right, sir?"

"I don't know."

"There I heard two gentlemen discussing the date of the finish of the great Tichborne trial. Neither knew the correct date, sir, so I ventured to interpose the remark: 'I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but the date of the close of the Tichborne trial was February 28th, 1874.' One of the gentlemen turned round and said: 'That was before you were born!' I replied, 'I am quite aware of that, sir,' and then I went on to give them all the leading particulars of that famous trial. Well, sir, finding how surprised they were at my stock of knowledge, I felt encouraged, and continued to give them a number of dates of other famous trials and events in English history, and the names of Derby winners, and so on, all in rapid succession. Quite unnoticed by me a third gentleman was a listener to our conversation, sir, and when I had fin——"

"Where is the Large Black Pig Society?"

"At 12, Hanover Square, W., sir. And it was founded in 1899. Am I right, sir?"

"I don't know; I am not a member."

"——and when I had finished my long string of dates, this third gentleman came up to me and said: 'Would you like to go on the stage?'

"Well, sir, I naturally thought the gentleman was joking, but to convince me he

was in earnest he slipped a sovereign into——"

"What was the date on it?"

"1893, sir—and you must take my word for that!"

I did.

"——into my hand, saying, 'Come along with me, my lad, and I will show you whether or not I am joking.' He then and there took me to the Standard Music Hall, Victoria——"

"Built?"

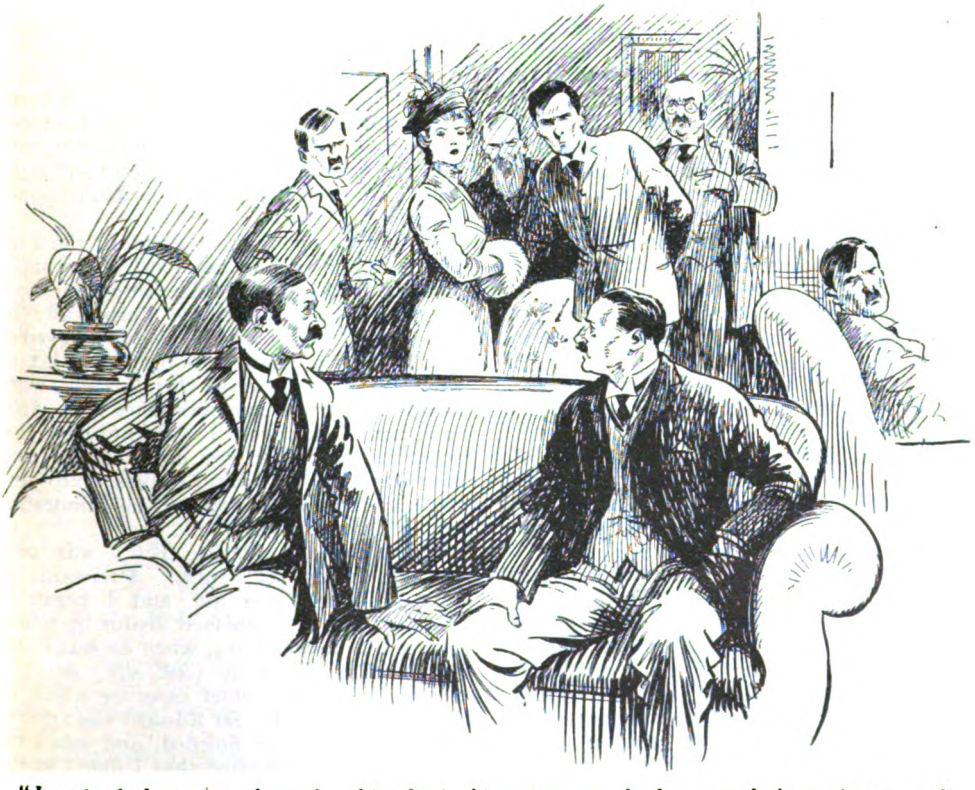
"1854; burnt 21st October, 1866, and rebuilt in 1868. Am I right, sir?"

"I haven't the remotest idea."

"——Victoria, in a hansom cab—the first I had been in—to see the manager. It was six o'clock when we arrived at the Standard. The manager and some other gentlemen took me into an office and put me through my paces for two hours. They checked all my dates and facts with almanacks and books of reference, then: 'We'll put him on at eight-thirty!' said the manager, and so, on that very same evening, I made my first appearance. Nervous? I nearly died! But I got through it all right. My 'turn' was so startling in its novelty that I was immediately engaged for three weeks, and I had to obtain my employers' permission to change my shift from night to day work, so that I could have the evenings free. At the end of the three weeks it was realized that my novel performance was popular and likely to be a permanent success, and so, on July 29th, 1901, I pushed my last scoop of coal into the retort and thus brought my gas-works career to an end."

Since that day "Datas" has toured the world several times as a music-hall performer, leaving satisfied but completely baffled audiences in almost every place of note in the British Empire and in the U.S.A. In addition: "I have had the honour of appearing before the most distinguished audiences in private residences and at garden parties, and royalty and nobility have been pleased to ask questions—and listen to my replies."

On his first visit to America, about twenty years ago, "Datas" sold his head for two thousand pounds to a syndicate of doctors—delivery to be made after "Datas" had ceased to memorize. As the last of the



"I noticed that a number of unfriendly-looking strangers had grouped themselves round us. Presently it was whispered that they took me for the executioner."

syndicate died in 1922, "Datas," feeling his head to be his own property once again, bequeathed it to King's College Hospital.

"Datas" is not so prolific of anecdotes as one might expect from a man with his extraordinary memory. His appetite is for dates, facts, names. He has trained himself to be fairly quick at the rough-and-ready repartee essential for his music-hall work, but he has not a keen sense of humour. His favourite story is of an occasion when he was mistaken for a hangman:—

"I was performing at Liverpool in May, 1903. The Assizes were being held at the time, and I obtained permission to be present at the trial of the mutineers of the ship *Veronica*, who were charged with murder on the high seas. The trial lasted three days, and concluded at five minutes past nine on May 15th, the three prisoners being found guilty and sentenced to death. Well, sir, I was due on the stage at ten o'clock, and no sooner did I appear before the footlights than someone shouted, 'When did the *Veronica* trial finish?' and my answer, 'At five minutes past nine this evening,' took the whole audience by surprise. It so happened that next day I was sitting in the hotel discussing the trial, when after a time we began to talk about the method of executing criminals. As I was describing details of the last dread scene, I noticed that a number of unfriendly-looking strangers had grouped themselves round us. Presently it was whispered that they took me for Billington, the executioner; so, fearing unpleasant developments, I quitted the room as soon as possible.

"I have always been interested in railways, sir, and a pet diversion of mine is to choose some out-of-the-way station on one of the lines and repeat the stations in order therefrom to the terminus, in either direction. Often——"

"Name the saints whose anniversaries are kept on the three days following Christmas Day."

"St. Stephen, December 26th; St. John the Evangelist, December 27th; Holy Innocents, December 28th. Am I right, sir?"

"I will look them up."

"When doing this I unconsciously speak aloud. Well, sir, I had been down to Kent, and, missing the express, had to wait for an hour on the up platform at Ashford. To while away the time I ran through a list of stations from Ashford up and down the line, main and the several branches. Then I noticed that one of the station officials was eyeing me rather narrowly, and soon he came straight up and said, 'You've got a fine eyesight.' I looked up, and there in front of me, but some ten yards distant, was a large time-table. Then I realized that the official actually thought I was reading off the stations from it! To continue the illusion, I went on repeating the stations in their correct order, to the utter amazement of the railway man.

"One night at a music-hall in a small Irish town I was asked the year of Oliver Cromwell's birth, and no sooner had the question been asked than the hall was filled with hisses and groans. I knew, of course, when Cromwell was born and much of his history, but, realizing how bitterly he was hated because of the Drogheda and other massacres, I had an inspiration, and roared above the din: 'Cromwell—Cromwell! Who is he? I never heard of him!' That put the hot-headed audience into a good temper again.

"ONE of the most curious questions I have ever been asked, sir, was put by a lady who rose from her seat and asked me, in a tremulous voice, if I could tell her how soon after marriage a lady's heart could be broken? I confessed my inability to answer her; so she then asked me to relate the career of Lord Roberts, a request to which I promptly acceded.

"Which reminds me that Lord Kitchener once honoured me, during my first visit to Australia, by coming to the circus at Perth, and asking me to give the names and numbers of the original regiments of the British Army and all the principal battles they had fought. This I did correctly, and his lordship seemed surprised.

"Another evening, in London, the Lord Chief Justice was an occupant of the stalls and his lordship put these three questions to me: 'When were the Corn Laws repealed?' 'When was the *Utopia* wrecked?' and 'When did Mr. Low propose a tax on matches?' I answered them at once, without knowing who my questioner was. After my 'turn,' however, I was informed that someone wished to see me, and the next moment his lordship walked into my dressing-room and expressed his admiration of my performance.

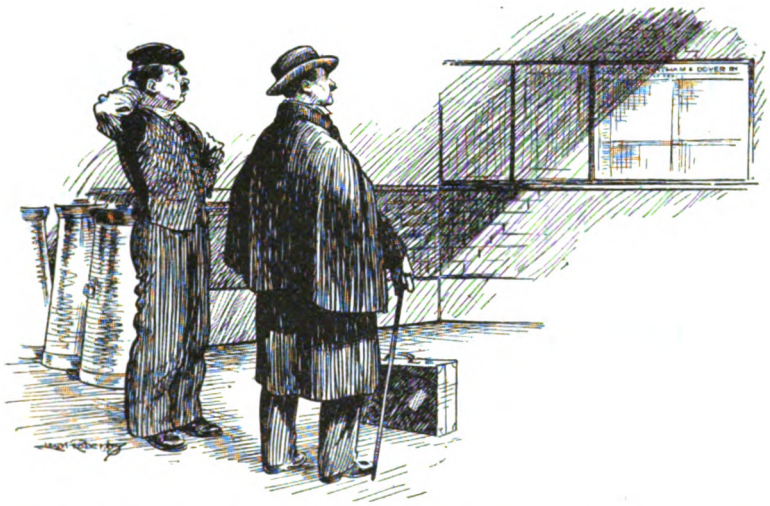
"Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., was once present during my 'turn.' Afterwards he came round to see me, and I began to astonish my distinguished visitor by telling him when he was born, when he was called to the Bar, when he took silk, and also particulars of the chief cases in which he had been engaged. Sir Edward was amazed by the time I had finished, and asked me how I did it. I replied that I didn't know.

"Many a time people have tried to trap me with trick questions, sir. One was: 'When did the Jews first enter the old-

clothes trade?' to which I answered, '1491 B.C., the year of the exodus from Egypt, when they sold Joseph's coat of many colours.' Another one, 'When was Kruger vaccinated?' and to this I replied, 'On March 15th, 1826—and it took in four

"To remember an address, concentrate thoroughly on the name of the person and the name and number of the street. If these are remembered they will recall to mind the rest of the address.

"It is useless to repeat a fact or figure



"I realized that the official actually thought I was reading off the stations from the time-table."

places. Is that right, sir?' This brought down the house."

I have said that "Datas" does not know the secret of his astounding memory; but he has evolved, during his career as a public performer, a rough-and-ready system which, he asserts, has made it easier for him to store his facts and figures and even improve his memory. His advice to those who wish to train their memories can be summed up briefly as follows: "To memorize one hundred and twenty names, learn six at a time by repetition; you will then know the lot in nine hours.

"To memorize card games, play with an imaginary player until you know every card in the pack.

"To memorize figures, add up to thirty, then add a battle or wreck to each number below thirty until you have memorized thirty wrecks, battles, racehorses, or any other thirty facts you have put with the thirty figures.

"To memorize faces, remember where you meet, the time of day, and circumstance, such as weather or an anniversary of a great event.

"Start with a few facts or figures. When these are thoroughly 'digested,' add to the number; but when you increase your total always repeat those previously learned.

over and over again, parrot-fashion. You might do this for six months and then, if you stopped for a month, you would probably forget. Instead of empty repetition, concentrate your thoughts on a strong mental impression associated with the fact or figure; form a vivid mind-picture as a background.

"Of the science of mnemonics I know absolutely nothing. The memory trained without any artificial aid whatever is of superior strength to one cultivated by artifice. I adopted Nature's means in childhood, and never at any time since have I had occasion to supersede the natural system.

"When you are asked to remember a date or event, try to call up some 'mind-pictures,' for you will find them of great assistance.

"To attain success in memorizing, you must take one thing at a time, give it your closest attention, and gain the clearest mental impression of it that you can. Store its facts, connect its ideas with other ideas of a similar character, note resemblances with any other ideas; if possible, endeavour to strike a contrast; for instance: Tom Thumb calls to mind the Polish giant; Dante's 'Inferno' reminds you of Milton's 'Paradise Lost and Regained.'"

Exit Partridge Johnson

A NELSON CHIDDENHAM STORY

By

BERTRAM ATKEY

Illustrated by
C. E. BROCK, R.I.

I.

THE crest-embossed square of massy hand-made paper was given to Master Nelson Rodney Drake Chiddenham by Mary, the parlourmaid, at a stage of the supper hour when, in spite of his naturally gentle nature, Nelson's ginger-like hair was beginning slightly to bristle, his greenish eyes to harden, and his oval chin—mother's—to stick out a little, under the impact of the heavy-hoofed sarcasms of his brother August. These symptoms of rising wrath, it may be explained, were not aroused by such of August's mallet-headed witticisms as were directed at Nelson himself, for the youngest of the extensive family of Squire Chiddenham was a self-contained, self-controlled youth, greatly given to silence under fire.

But a brotherly insult which would fall, blunted, from the toughened hide of one's fraternal junior may yet achieve rankling entry through the same epidermis when it is aimed at the fraternal junior's dog.

Big brother August had chosen to secure himself from a threatened dullness by the utterance of facetious criticism of Nelson's bloodhound-setter pup—primarily seizing upon an unguarded observation by Nelson to his father that Red Sleuth (for so he had named his animal) might safely be regarded as a perfect retriever. For he, Nelson, had that day imparted unto the dog the last instruction in the art of retrieving tenderly to hand which Red Sleuth would need until the shooting season began.

"Some bone-undertaker!" August (at that period a diligent manufacturer of film-style, alleged American slang) had sneered; "I'll say *some* bone-undertaker, that smell-dog——"

"August!" demurred Mrs. Chiddenham.

"That—gun-dog, then—of yours, Nelse. You told us he's a perfect setter and you said he's a grand bloodhound. Now he's a first-class retriever. All you need to do now is to paint him like a spotted Dalmatian and then you'll be able to sell him for two bob to Lord George Sanger for a leopard!"

Nelson's hair had begun to erect itself instantly, but the arrival of the imposing letter had allayed its bristlesome harshness.

"Huh, you'll see some day, Aug," he stated, and thumbed open his letter.

It was brief but businesslike—inscribed by that elderly acquaintance of Nelson, the great Sir Milner Bayliss, original donor of the intricately-bred pup, and owner of the large, affluent estate adjoining the small, impoverished estate of Nelson's father.

Nelson studied the document. Briefly it set forth the news that Sir Milner was acting as host to a youthful nephew and his mother, and would be gratified if Nelson could find it convenient to breakfast with him on the following morning, at which attractive function he could make the acquaintance of Ethelred (the nephew) and, all being well, oblige Sir Milner by rather taking Ethelred off his hands for the rest of the day.

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"*I may as well say, my boy,*" wrote Sir Milner, "*that Ethelred has not quite got your open-air tastes, but I believe he might be willing to learn, and I should be much obliged if you can spare a day for him.*

"*P.S.—Watson says there are two nests of young woodcock down by the marshy end of Longtangle Copse, and I have told him that you are to be shown them if you like.*"

Nelson passed the invitation to his mother and pondered.

He did not feel a very palpitant joy at the prospect of meeting Ethelred—but those young woodcocks sounded highly promising. He would be glad of a glance at the young woodcock in its native haunts.

"Is anyone waiting for an answer, Mary?" asked Mrs. Chiddenham.

"There's one of the keepers having some beer in the kitchen, mum," said Mary. "He isn't in any particular hurry, he said."

"No, of course not," guffawed Aug, the self-appointed humorist of the family.

"You want to go, don't you, Nelson?" she asked; and, reading his freckled but rather attractive face much more easily than a printed page, forthwith instructed Mary to convey to the care of the unhasting messenger Master Chiddenham's affirmative response to Sir Milner.

Mother, indeed, being human, was probably more charmed with the invitation than Nelson. Though everybody else in the family, except that silent devotee of shotgun and saddle, the Squire, was greatly mystified that wealthy, childless Sir Milner should feel the slightest interest in the somewhat mute and—Aug would add—meaningless Nelson, mother and the Squire saw more clearly.

They realized that the tastes of the elderly, rather stout, unmarried insurance financier were practically identical with the tastes of their cage-legged, spectacled, and eyebrowless son, as may in due course be seen. It is true that Sir Milner secretly admired Nelson even a little more than

The last instruction in the art of retrieving tenderly to hand.

"They're faithful chaps, these keepers—no keeper will ever hurry away from anywhere as long as the barrel holds out, if I happen to know anything about them."

"Ah, but *do* you, August?" asked Mrs. Chiddenham, gently, and without waiting for an answer turned to her youngest son.

Nelson admired Sir Milner—but of this Nelson was providentially unaware.

Nobody would have been more surprised than the red-headed youth who went limping easily out across the lawn next morning at about half-past six had he known that his early-rising parents

were watching him from their bedroom window.

"There goes Nelson. He will be too early," said Mrs. Chiddenham.

"Not he. He's got a good deal to interest him on the way," explained the Squire. "Look at the way that dog keeps to heel, the queer-looking beggar! Half an inch from the boy's very boot, never more, never less. He's got a great natural gift with animals——"

"Except mules," sighed Mrs. Chiddenham. It was in the course of a friendly fracas with an unrideable mule that Nelson's leg had suffered the damage which the iron cage he wore was slowly repairing.

"Is the puppy really so ridiculous as August pretends?" she asked.

"Ridiculous! It's Aug that makes himself ridiculous about dogs. Nelson's a wizard with them. Why, that queer little cross-bred customer is shaping into the finest gun-dog I've ever seen or heard of. There are hundreds of men who would give fifty guineas for it as it stands."

"Does Nelson know?"

"He hasn't an idea of it"—the Squire hesitated—"at least, I suppose not; but he's a self-contained, modest youngster, and you never quite know what he knows or what he's thinking."

"Perhaps not. But he is a good boy."

The Squire patted her shoulder.

"He'll do—I've no doubt he'll do, my dear."

"He will have to go back to school soon. His leg is much better, and so are his eyes."

(It had been a slight miscalculation concerning the combustion potentiality of loose gunpowder that had temporarily rendered Nelson's big glasses necessary.)

"Plenty of time," said the Squire, comfortably.

He had not misjudged his son. It was half-past eight before Nelson, followed closely at heel by an Appetite-on-Four-Paws, hove in sight of Longwater Hall.

Two hours' hard practice at the art of ranging for game, dropping to wing, fur, whistle, hand, and shot (discharged blank from an old pistol) is a marvellous enlivener of the gastric juices.

NELSON sniffed.

"Sir Milner is up, Red," he stated, unnecessarily, for Red had caught the faint scent of cigar smoke a quarter of a mile or so back. A creature that can scent a snipe at considerably over a hundred yards away is not likely to miss the odour of a cigar burning at almost any distance windward.

Sir Milner was indeed up and about—arrayed in the garb of prosperity—the sombre City clothes which have done so much to make board meetings what they are. Clearly Sir Milner was about to take a day in the City.

Ethelred had not yet graced the morning with a public appearance, and Sir Milner, after greetings, gave Nelson the briefest outline of this candidate for his chaperonage.

"Ethelred is probably all right at heart, my boy, and I've no doubt, with your tact, you will get on pretty fairly well with him. Of course, he hasn't had your advantages, Nelson. He's an only child, and his mother—well, um, she doesn't precisely hate him. No. A few big, coarse, brutal brothers would have been a very great help to the boy. Still, he's been denied that, poor chap, and his father has had no time—nor encouragement—to train the lad."

They were in the big hall, and Sir Milner, with one eye and one ear sharply on the alert, wound up his outline rather abruptly as a lady with her arm round the shoulders of a boy of about thirteen, Nelson's own age, appeared at the head of the huge stairs.

"Do what you can to get him keen on things, Nelson, my boy. Explain some of the interesting—er—aspects of country life—dogs—game—guns—fishing—that sort of thing. Make him enjoy himself."

A few moments later the introductions had been completed and the little party was at breakfast.

Nelson's quick though wholly unobtrusive perceptions had photographed Mrs. Trevillion as a thin, slightly querulous lady of middle age, a rather faded blonde, whose sole interest in life was the instant gratification of the lightest command, the slightest whim, the most fleeting fancy of her son. Nelson, reserved, gravely polite, had no difficulty in satisfying her. He was a difficult youth to find fault with, being at all times as slow to volunteer questions and opinions as he was quick to provide answers—and opinions when asked for the same.

Ethelred's mother decided that he was a dull boy, but harmless.

ETHELRED himself was of about Nelson's age—now thirteen—with peculiar pale fawnish-cream hair, a very pink and plentiful face, rather cool grey eyes, and a tiny but very capable mouth. Though in the presence of his mother one might have hesitated to call Ethelred fat, nevertheless he was distinguished by a very marked tendency to extreme cubical capacity. His legs were perhaps short, but they were stout, and the sur-plus-fours he wore did little or nothing to reduce his general effect of thickness. His neck was short, his chin double, and his coat a trifle too small for him.

His manner to Nelson was not hostile,

but it was absent-minded, as it was to Sir Milner—and it was obvious that the imminence of breakfast somewhat took Ethelred's mind off mere people.

His motto, quite evidently, was "Eat hearty." And he did so. Nelson had been hungry, and he did as well at the very superior spread provided by Sir Milner as a normal boy can. But his devastations were small and colourless compared with the steadily-sustained efforts of Ethelred.

Yet, though that portly youth had no more than settled down to his attack on the sideboard when Nelson finished, he won Nelson's heart at the beginning of the meal.

It was Mrs. Trevillion who unconsciously made ready this conquest. She glanced at the bloodhound-setter as it quietly settled down by Nelson's chair and said :—

"But, Milner dear, is it quite—that is, do you allow dogs in the breakfast-room ?"

"Yes, Millicent—*that* dog, anyway."

"'Course he does, mother. That's a grand dog, that dog is, and I'll have some more cream with this grape-fruit, please," said Ethelred.

Distressed and guilty concerning her treasure's lack of cream, Mrs. Trevillion forgot the red pup forthwith.

But not so Ethelred—though he was nearing the marmalade stage, some considerable time after, before he referred again to Red Sleuth.

"I like your pup, Nelson," he said. "Can he beg ?"

"No; he's not much good at tricks," explained Nelson, his eyes friendly but indulgent. "But he can find his game and set to it, he's stanch on point, steady to fur, shot, and wing, drops to hand, shot, and whistle, retrieves to hand like—like—an angel, and he can track a man at a gallop—for a pup—from here to—here to——"

"Christmas !" suggested Sir Milner.

"Yes, sir," Nelson agreed, politely.

Ethelred swallowed his last lump of kidney.

"A jolly fine old feller, your dog is, Nelson," he conceded, tranquilly, and reached for what he termed the "squish." "And he's a very pretty colour, too."

A motor sighed from the terrace and Sir Milner rose.

"I must be off if I am going to catch my train," he said, rising. "Have a good time, you young fellows. Is there anything I can do for you in town, Milly ?"

Apparently there was, for Mrs. Trevillion accompanied her wealthy brother to the car, speaking low but urgently—leaving Ethelred and his chaperon eyeing each other across the ruins of breakfast.

"Why don't you give your dog something to eat, Nelson ?" asked Ethelred, amiably.

Nelson hesitated. It was an awkward question. Nelson would not have dreamed of offering his dog anything from Sir Milner's sideboard.

But Ethelred was not a sensitive plant. He rose—with an air of difficulty—and brought a big dish in each hand from the sideboard.

"Let the dog eat, dash it all," he said, protestingly, and presented Red Sleuth with about a pound and a half of kidney, liver, and bacon.

But Red Sleuth only gazed eloquently, from behind extremely nervous nostrils, at Nelson. Who gave permission—for a small fraction of the meal only.

"Certainly let a dog have a bite of something to keep his strength up," said Ethelred. "Dash it, Nelson, don't cut things down on a dog ! What are we going to do to-day ? I vote we take a hamper out into the open with us and have a real jolly time !"

Mrs. Trevillion, returning, agreed with Ethelred, and instructed the butler to notify those responsible for hampers to that effect.

II.

"MY uncle told us how you found out about that poacher, Partridge Johnson, who stole the pheasant eggs, Nelson," said Ethelred, about three hours later, as he sank solidly into a sitting position under the eaves of a hayrick at one end of the Bayliss estate. I s'pose the chap used to have 'em hard-boiled, don't you, Nelson ? But he had no business to steal 'em."

He glanced at his wrist-watch.

"It's too early for lunch, I s'pose. But we've walked an awful long way and I'd like a rest. So I'll have a look at a book for a bit."

He extracted from his clothing a luridly paper-covered volume entitled "Sparkling Spurs, or The Cowboy Kid of Rattlesnake Ranch," and settled to it.

Nelson noted that, whatever else may tide, Ethelred was anchored at least until lunch time, and he made no effort to resist the irresistible.

"All right, Ethelred," he agreed. "But you're enjoying yourself, aren't you ? Sir Milner was anxious for you to enjoy yourself. You liked seeing those young 'cock, didn't you ?"

Ethelred nodded, yawning.

"They weren't bad for woodcock, but I like turkeys," he said. "And I'm enjoying myself, Nelson." He dragged the luncheon hamper to where he could rest a protecting elbow on it, and returned to the study of the Sparkling Spurs of the Cowboy Kid in his serpent-haunted domicile.

NELSON hung fire a moment ; then, attracted by certain movements of Red Sleuth, followed the engaging little cross-bred round a corner of the haystack.

"Rats, Nelson—o'ly rats!" said Ethelred, as Nelson disappeared. "Always rats round haystacks—natural history—naturally——" He spoke drowsily—evidently the Cowboy Kid had not trodden on one of the rattling serpents in that chapter.

But Nelson had forgotten the existence of Ethelred—for Red Sleuth was steering him deviously in and out and round about the half-dozen or so big haystacks. Nelson, studying his dog with rapt eyes, was a little puzzled. He guessed—more by that instinct which made him what his father called a "wizard with dogs" than by the action of Red Sleuth—that the pup was not on a game trail. And rats Red had been drilled to disdain for the slinking and cannibal vagabonds they are. It could hardly be a man-trail, for Red was not at all in the habit of nosing without instructions on stray man-trails in a world crisscrossed with these.

Nelson "dropped" the dog with a whistle, and while Red crouched he knelt and sniffed the trail immediately under the dog's jowl.

Nelson helped himself to another sniff.

But all he could smell was plain, ordinary earth, flavoured with the mildewy odour of rotting hay, long since trodden in—with—was it ?—just a faint, far-off suggestion, a suspicion, of paraffin.

Nelson re-sniffed.

Now—was that oddness in the familiar, well-beloved odour of good English earth faintly reminiscent of paraffin—or was it not ?

Nelson scowled and rose, really puzzled. Only Sleuth could answer that—and the red one was not much on speech.

"Hold up, Sleuth!" he commanded, sharply and professionally, and Sleuth "held up." That is to say he launched himself forward, and without a check or waver ran the trail like a wolf towards the thickets of an old copse some fifty yards away.

Nelson limped swiftly after him, and found him feathering at the back of a great rotted-out hollow oak just inside the copse.

Nelson called him off, dropped him, and peered into the dark cavern of the hollow tree. Inside he saw a battered red petrol tin. He examined it—and found it full of paraffin.

"Paraffin, Red!" he said, eyeing the dog. "But you weren't on a paraffin trail, old man. Plenty of those at home—round at the back."

He studied the ground diligently, but found nothing of interest.

It occurred to him to lead the pup back to the starting point.

This he did—discovering Ethelred fast asleep.

From the starting-point of the hamper he laid his dog on again, and the brainy little beast eagerly obliged. Watching closely, Nelson marked almost the exact spot where the sleuth picked up the trail, and, dropping him yet again, the boy went on hands and knees at that spot, peering tensely through his lenses at the ground.

His brother Aug would have roared to see him—but Nelson rose in a few seconds with something gingerly held between finger and thumb.

It was an inch of freshly broken clay pipe-stem.

Warning Red Sleuth with a monitory finger to keep at the "drop," Nelson rested his elbows on his knees, his chin cupped in his left hand, and studied the white end of the stem.

"Let me see," he said. "That break's quite fresh. Some man has been round these ricks, and Red says he's been near that paraffin. Perhaps he put it there. I wonder why ?"

It does not take any boy of average intelligence long to urge his thoughts onwards from a combination of haystacks and paraffin to a consideration of that useful element called fire ; and, especially if he be a country-bred boy, he can usually deduce from a combination of haystacks, paraffin, and fire, the existence of that rather pitiable emotion or spirit—revenge.

From time immemorial the burning of an enemy's haystacks has occupied, in the mind of the more desperately vengeful rustic, a high and honoured place in the list of effective revenges.

And so before the wearied Ethelred had snored half a-dozen times Nelson had puzzled out much of the ready-made mystery to which Red Sleuth had directed him.

It looked to Nelson as if someone was coquetting with the idea of whiling away an hour or so in the practice of the art of incendiarism.

Nelson went rather pale as he glanced at the big ricks. It needed no figuring to discover that Sir Milner Bayliss had here amassed an extremely valuable quantity of fine meadow hay.

His nice mouth tightened unconsciously and his oval chin—mother's—stuck out.

"I've got my suspicions, Red," he said, anxiously, and leaned to the slumbering Ethelred, jarring him gently with his elbow.

"Lunch time ?" asked that one, rubbing his eyes.

The boy went on hands and knees, peering through his lenses at the ground.

"No—something serious," hissed Nelson, and swiftly related his news.

"Going to burn my Uncle Milner's haystacks? Are they, though? Golly, what a blaze!" commented Ethelred, with some interest.

"Yes—and I'm going to track whoever it is—with Red Sleuth!" declared Nelson. "Coming?"

Ethelred hesitated, glanced at the hamper, then temporized.

"Is it far?"

"I don't know. If it's who I suspect it's a good three miles across country."

"Well, they've got to have the fire here, whoever it is," said Ethelred. "So there's no hurry, for we're on the spot already, Nelson. It's a long way to walk—when anybody's leg has gone all dead like mine has. Couldn't I remain here on guard and get the spread ready while you do the tracking?"

Nelson agreed—with a secret relief. He had put the matter to Ethelred more for sake of politeness than in the hope that the portly youth would provide any really valuable collaboration.

"All right. I'll try to be back by lunch-time, Ethelred," he said. "If I'm not back you start without waiting for me."

"All right, Nelson; I'll start if you'd sooner I did," agreed Ethelred, amiably.

Nelson promptly weaved himself around a stack and was gone.

IF your bloodhound will tolerate the fuss and trample of heavy hoofs it is usually better to follow him on horseback, for one is in less danger of ultimately becoming totally foundered.

But Nelson did not possess a horse, and consequently it was a well-warmed and gasping youth who presently—a mile from the haystack—hurled himself on his red-haired pup and precipitated them both into a deepish ditch under a stunted hedge.

"Down, Red!" he breathed, and after a moment arose, resolutely clutching a handful of the skin of the setter-bloodhound's neck, and peered through a tiny gap in that hedge.

Far away to the right there moved a dark figure.

Nelson studied it for a few seconds. Then it disappeared into the shadow of the coppice from which it had first appeared.

Red Sleuth wriggled a little, eager to be away again—but Nelson checked him.

"Wait a minute, boy—lemme get a mouthful of breath, then."

It was as well he did so, for even as he moved to rise and resume the trail a minute later the figure appeared again.

That was in the nature of a surprise to Master Chiddenham, for despite the handicap of his steamy lenses, he had believed that distant figure to be moving away. But, instead, he perceived presently that it was moving towards him—and straightly.

He waited until it grew large enough for him to make it out as the figure of a man—a man who seemed strangely to be attracted by anything in the way of cover, for never once did he move out from under hedges or thickets into open country. Several times Nelson lost sight of him—and each time he picked him out again he was nearer.

"It's the man, Red—and he's coming back the same way. We better get off the line," said Nelson.

Carefully he studied his immediate surroundings. Then, selecting a small clump of tall, ragged weeds perhaps twenty yards away, he crawled behind the screen of the hedge to these, where, stomach flat to the ground, in the manner of the serpent of the dust, he waited, with keenly whispered counsel of utter silence to his gun-dog.

"Quiet, Red, mind! Let him pass—let him pass."

And anon he passed, moving with a grim but furtive stealth, peering about him.

In his right hand he bore a petrol can.

Nelson had made a good guess at his identity long before, but now he recognized him.

It was Mr. Partridge Johnson—that fell and violent enemy of all pheasants, partridges, woodcock, their offspring and their eggs. Even the little snipes of the marsh were not free from the craftsome attacks of Mr. J. Nor the feeble-witted conies of the warrens secure from his engines of destruction.

It was, Nelson perceived, none other than this master of nets and gins and wire-woven snares, now released from behind the high and solid walls of Gilchester Jail, with whom he had to deal.

He watched through his mask of weeds and he saw clearly that he had a high task to his hand.

"Partridge" Johnson was engaged upon a mission of vengeance.

"He's going to burn down Sir Milner's haystacks—because he had Partridge Johnson sent to prison for stealing all those pheasants' eggs!" breathed Nelson softly to his hound-dog.

There was something terrifying about this form of arson to Nelson—who was well aware of the anxiety and sheer sweat which had been used up in winning those handsome ricks. Haystacks do not erect themselves, nor are they piled because they smell sweetly and are fragrant. On the contrary, they have been watched grow almost blade by blade, and men have arisen at peep o' dawn to amass them—labouring to that end, in continuous violent effort and perspiration, till the edge o' dark.

Nelson knew. He had, at times, himself been impressed into the fierce effort to win the harvest that sends the milk and butter to town—his station being at the business end of a wooden rake that went more and more heavily as the sunset drew near.

The boy was appalled.

He sighed—a sound of sheer relief—as, thinking desperately, he saw the poacher deposit his burden within the recesses of a brambly brake, straighten himself, then sit upon a bank, and extract from an unseen pocket a crumpled cigarette, which he proceeded to light and smoke.

Nelson, reflecting anxiously, was suddenly aware of an illumination within his not unattractive skull.

"He's resting, Red—and I think he will rest ten minutes or a quarter of an hour."

He peered earnestly across the wide, rolling downland.

"Shepherd Wordleberry ought to be the other side of the hill, Red, and I could get there in ten minutes," he muttered, decided instantly, and wormed his way through the hedge, *en route* for such reinforcements as Shepherd Wordleberry might comprise.

BUT it was within five minutes that the incendiarist arose, resumed his highly combustible burden, and pushed on cautiously towards his destination.

Upon his trail followed—nobody. Neither the man Wordleberry nor the boy Chiddenham—nor the setter-bloodhound Red Sleuth.

Nelson had miscalculated matters, and, far in the rear of the paraffin-bearer, he was striding furiously to overcome the difficulties which a perverse Fate seemed to have strewn across his path.

Shepherd Wordleberry had not been where Nelson had calculated he would be. Instead, his flock was dotting picturesquely but uselessly a very distant hill, and Nelson after a swift journey had given up his idea of enlisting the shepherd's aid.

But his spurt over the downland had not been wholly in vain. It had been necessary to cross a winding, narrow, chalky road *en route* to the hill which should have been occupied by Mr. Wordleberry and his sheep, and it was not until he was at the point of dashing through the hedge bordering this road that a voice raised in wrath from the roadway stayed his urgent stridings.

It was a voice he knew—a voice he never forgot—the voice of a lady he had met aforetime, and that when she was raising it in much the same way, aiming it at the same target—her husband.

Cautiously Nelson peeped through the hedge, listening intently.

"What business of yours is it where Partridge is taking a little drop of paraffin?" the woman was demanding. "You mind your own business and he'll mind his—and I'll mind mine. If you'd minded your own business we never should have been turned out of the Waggoner's Rest. We should have been licensed vitlers to-day instead of a couple of tramps. So shut up and keep quiet, see? If a man like Partridge wants a lift along the road and asks me for it, that's my business, not yours. So set quiet, and don't answer me back. It's my pony and my cart, and I'll give a lift to a friend if I want to, even if he had a bar'l of paraffin with him."

Nelson stared at the big, fierce, flushed face of the woman, who, sitting in a ramshackle cart attached to a ramshackle pony, was thus lecturing a depressed and dismal-featured little man leaning against the pony.

This was the couple who, a little time before, he had discovered to be the "receivers" of the pheasants' eggs stolen by Mr. Johnson.

But Nelson dared not wait to hear more—indeed, he had heard enough already.

He drew back and retraced his steps on the trail of the paraffin-bearer.

Everything was clear to him now.

The couple in the lane had abandoned or been forced to quit their shockingly managed beerhouse, and were now migrating elsewhere—practically tramps; and Mr. Partridge Johnson had evacuated the hovel which had been his headquarters prior to his removal to more commodious premises.

And, as a farewell "gesture," he intended, *en passant*, to touch a match or so, as one may say, to the haystacks of Sir Milner Bayliss, who had initiated the popular movement which had landed Mr. Johnson in what the French call the salad-basket.

"If those people are giving him a lift in the pony-cart, of course he might be miles away by the time the fire was discovered," panted Nelson, travelling diligently back on the old trail.

But much time had been lost, and Nelson was drawing very near to the ricks before he saw Mr. Johnson again.

And when he did, the vengeful Partridge was hastening from the *cache* where he had stored his first tin of paraffin.

Nelson scowled.

Hastily he tied Red Sleuth to a stump of thorn close by, warned that juvenile man-tracker to be silent and good, and, keeping under cover of a hedge, limped swiftly down to the scene of the impending arson.

But, desperately though he travelled, he knew that he would be too late.

Only Ethelred, on the spot, might possibly save the ricks by appearing unexpectedly to face the fire-planning Mr. Johnson.

"But, of course, he's fast asleep—or so busy eating out of the hamper that he can't hear!" panted Nelson, as he charged onward.

HE was still a hundred and fifty yards away when Mr. Johnson crouched under the biggest rick and raised the first can to deluge the spot with oil.

Nelson, groaning with effort, drew in a laboured breath to shout, when, looking to the anxious Nelson like a very knight in shining armour, Ethelred the plump strolled leisurely round a corner of the rick, one hand in his pocket, the other holding a large pork pie close to his lower face.

The incendiarist sprang up swiftly like a startled cat, and Nelson pelted down upon them like one possessed, his eyes bulging, his face the hue of a well-ripened tomato.

It was undoubtedly what the arrested burglar is said to describe as "a fair cop." Partridge had been discovered, red-handed. But he was not yet taken—the "cop" was incomplete, and the vindictive Johnson speedily made that perfectly clear.

He advanced upon the portly Ethelred with gestures of menace and violence. He was big and as powerful as he was unrefined.

Ethelred took a quick bite of pork pie and put the remainder of the delicacy safely in a rat-hole tunnelled in the rick.

Then he surprised Nelson—for he bore down upon the advancing Mr. Johnson with wide-flung arms—in the manner of those who attempt to stop a runaway pony.

But Partridge had caught sight of Nelson

now, and he must have realized that the need for swift action was desperate. So he imported it into the tableau.

He checked, raised the red can of oil high in the air, and threw it viciously at the fearless Ethelred's head.

The lad stopped the novel missile with the upper portion of his forehead. Ethelred had a good forehead, with plenty of solid bone about it, but a tin petrol-can half full of oil, flung heartily as Partridge flung it, is a tolerably effective anæsthetic.

Ethelred reeled, then crumpled and collapsed to the ground—and stayed there.

The man Johnson, pausing just long enough to shake his fist at Nelson, thirty yards off, then went away from that place—running with extraordinary swiftness and vigour.

Nelson perceived that instant, successful pursuit was out of the question. Besides, the ricks were now safe, and his implied duty that day was to see that Ethelred enjoyed himself.

Nelson, accordingly, made for the seeker after enjoyment.

Ethelred was not unconscious, but he was dazed, and there was a nasty cut along his forehead just above the border-line of his hair.

There was no water at hand, so Nelson bathed the cut with ginger-beer, of which there was a very generous supply in the hamper; and the astounding way his treatment revived the fallen one was plain proof of the fact that ginger-beer, applied externally, has almost as stimulating an effect on the "morale" of the human boy as it has when taken internally.

Within a few minutes Ethelred was sitting up, pale but smeary and indomitable.

"Is he gone, Nelse?" he asked, and, receiving an assurance that he was, smiled wanly.

"I thought he had shot at me, Nelse," he said; "he looked like a savage—all eyes and teeth."

Partridge raised the red can of oil in the air and

"Good old Ethelred," pæaned Nelson, enthusiastically; "the way you stood up to him was splendid. Splendid! And you saved the ricks——"

Ethelred looked extremely pleased.

"Yes, I saved 'em—*we* saved 'em. Let's have a drop of ginger-beer, Nelse—there's bags more in the hamper. Golly, how my head rings! I think I'll have to eat something to keep my strength up. Gimme that piece of pie out of that hole up there, Nelse. May as well bring the hamper round. I shall be all right in a minute."

He stared about.

"Where's the dog, Nelse? There's enough in the hamper for him, too. May as well let the dog eat. He'll track that man down all the better for having a bite o' something to eat!"

A sportsman, Ethelred.

threw it viciously at the fearless Ethelred's head.

III.

HALF an hour later Nelson and Ethelred were grimly following the trail of the departed Johnson, under the guidance of the red pup, which, nosing the ground like a bloodhound of thrice its years and training, appeared to read (with its nostrils) the route taken by the retiring Partridge about as easily as Nelson could have read it if the fugitive had been carrying a pail of whitewash with a hole in it.

Ethelred, at no time a rapid mover, was perspiring with extreme prodigality, and the table napkin (from the hamper) with which Nelson had bound his comrade's battered brow was wet.

Nelson made it an easy pace, for he was most anxious that Ethelred should enjoy himself.

And, in spite of the facts that the portly lad was breathing like an exhausted cart-horse, that his eyes bulged with effort, and his once pink cheeks were of a blood-red hue, he seemed to be deeply interested, if not actually revelling, in the affair.

But Nelson, noting the trend of the trail with the eye of a spectacled hawk, felt his heart sink as he saw how the red cross-bred inclined more and more to the first trail.

"We shall lose him, Ethelred. He worked round for the place in the road where the pony-cart was waiting, I'll bet twopence."

Ethelred uttered puffsome and windy sounds—presumably of disappointment.

Nelson was right.

The pup ran through the very gap at which Nelson had peered down the shallow bank, and in the centre of the road

stopped short, nosed uncertainly for a few seconds, then lifted its nose, staring up at Nelson, its mournful eyes quite plainly saying :—

"He must have put on a pair of wings here, Nelson, and flown the rest of the way."

Nelson understood, and patted the wonderful little beast.

"All right, my bonnie, all right, my boy," he crooned. "I know. He got into the cart here——"

A CLINK of steel and a voice raised in suffering or protest or anguish came faintly from around a near-by bend in the road, and it seemed to Nelson strangely familiar.

He moved on round the bend and there came face to face with his brother August, who was crouching by an antiquated motor-bike.

"Why, hello, Aug! I thought you were going to lunch at Downsmore Vicarage and play tennis afterwards with Betty McLeod!" he exclaimed, impulsively. "I'm jolly glad to see you, Aug, for we are on the track of a criminal and just lost his trail, Aug, but we know where he is and you can run him down on your motor-grid in a jiff, Aug. It's Partridge Johnson. He's been trying to set fire to some of Sir Milner's ricks and——"

"Shut *up*, you young ass!" snarled August suddenly, and as suddenly Nelson shut up. He saw then that the world was seriously awry for old Aug. He ran a brotherly eye over him and perceived that Aug was wearing his best flannels—his new bags, in fact—and white shoes, and, indeed, would have been looking rather brilliant had not something seemed to have dimmed his lustre.

Aug's hands were black, and his flannels were anointed in spots with dark oil, his cheeks scarlet though sooty in places, and there were foul smudges of burnt oil upon his white shoes; his hair was all beruffled and in his eyes there gleamed a maniacal light. Also, the motor-cycle appeared to be very seriously disembowelled.

August glared insanely at his little brother and his little brother's friend, drew a deep breath, and opened his mouth for an outburst that would really do justice to the feelings of one who, anticipating a cheerful lunch and a gay afternoon's tennis with sweet Betty McLeod, had instead been marooned for an hour past lunch-time on the downs with a stubborn motor-bike.

But he was too angry for shouting—far too angry.

He surveyed the twain with Red Sleuth and replied with icy, bitter, almost "fey" sarcasm :—

"Oh, so you and your friend in the turban—the Shah of Persia, I presume—think I've got nothing more—ah—intriguing to do than to pursue that frowzy brute Partridge Johnson along the merrie highway, do you?" he said, acidly. "You are labouring under the delusion that the rat-trap on wobbly wheels is the species of vehicle which will travel in any direction its rider wishes, I presume. (Gur-r-r! You beast!)" He kicked the motor-bike savagely in the ribs, thus collecting upon his white shoes further blobs of engine filth.

"Partridge Johnson, if you please," cried August aloud, staring madly upwards straight into the eye of the sun, like an eagle, and quivering with fury, "with Betty—with the prettiest girl in the South of England and a dash good lunch waiting for me!"

"Sorry, Aug," said Nelson, sympathetically. "Has the grid broken down?"

"No, you young chump!" bawled Aug. "She's broken up! Oh, Lord, look at the state I'm in! She was missing on both cylinders, both plugs have sooted up, something wrong with the mag, a broken valve spring, one big end run out, no oil, a puncture in the back wheel, and my young lunatic of a brother asks if she's broken down, and will I please oblige him by chasing some jailbird down the lane! *Ass!* Oh, get out, you little devils, and leave me alone, or I'll chuck this spanner at your fat young heads."

His voice was rising. Nelson looked at Ethelred and Ethelred looked at Nelson. Ethelred was not afflicted with an elder brother, but he was not so slow as he looked. He jerked his turbaned head at the gap and Nelson understood.

"Well, so long, Aug. Hope you'll manage all right. Awfully sorry about the sparking-plugs," said Nelson, civilly, and retired with Ethelred and the red pup through the gap—followed by the blessings of the white-hot Aug.

"That your brother, Nelse?" asked Ethelred.

Nelson nodded.

"Golly!" said Ethelred, sympathetically.

"We'd better follow Partridge up on foot," said Nelson, eyeing Ethelred rather hopelessly, and patting the panting pup.

Ethelred seemed to hesitate.

"Well, Nelse, I'd follow him to the last," he stated, "but—well, it's like this. The mater gets rather ratty if I'm not home for tea; and it's rather getting on for tea-time now. Strawberries and cream. My head rings like a bell, too."

Nelson understood.

"All right, Ethelred. I don't mind as long as you're enjoying yourself," he stated, seriously. "And I don't expect we should catch up with him."

She was tense in her manner to Nelson, in spite of his anxious assurances that Ethelred had heartily enjoyed himself.

So, slowly, partly victorious, partly defeated, they headed for home.

Ethelred, who, like many of the fat, could be very tactful, steered the conversation to Red Sleuth.

"I never saw such a dog in my life, Nelse," he said. "He's a topper. How did you get him? Would you like to sell him?"

The enumeration of Red Sleuth's virtues occupied them all the way back to where the mother of Ethelred was waiting on the terrace for her son.

She was tense in her manner to Nelson, in spite of his anxious assurances that Ethelred had heartily enjoyed himself. Nelson took tea alone with Red Sleuth while the battered one, despite his emphatic

protestations, was enforced indoors for the cleansing and dressing which his wound really needed—the beneficial effects of the ginger-beer having somewhat died away during the chase and the walk home.

BUT at dinner that night—to which Nelson, by reason of the pressing invitation of Ethelred and a sense of duty to Sir Milner, stayed—Ethelred was in great form, though perhaps a trifle feverish.

His adoring mother had no difficulty whatever in realizing that her son was something rather special in the way of heroes, and since Nelson, ever a sportsman, readily supported her belief and most of Ethelred's statements, perhaps the portly one was hardly to be blamed for unconsciously exaggerating his account of how he had that day saved his uncle's haystacks.

"Yes, I rushed right at him," he said, between mouthfuls, "and I said, 'Just drop that petrol tin at once. How dare you!' I said—didn't I, Nelson? And he smashed it down on my head. Awful. But my blood was up and so was Nelse's, and after I'd recovered consciousness and had a bite to eat we tracked him down—pretty nearly, didn't we, Nelse?"

"Nelse" agreed quietly.

Sir Milner studied his nephew with twinkling eyes, then glanced at Nelson.

"Well, I'm sure I'm very glad you saved the ricks," he said: "but how did you first discover what was going on, Ethelred?"

"Oh, Nelse and the dog did that," he explained.

Sir Milner's eyes twinkled more than ever—though it was not till later, when he and Nelson were alone, that he got the exact facts from the boy, for he was a tactful man and he knew that Nelson was not the youth to grudge Ethelred the lion's share of the glory, nor Ethelred's fond mother the joy of awarding the same to her son. She was accustomed to allowing Ethelred the lion's share of most things.

"I shall have to plan out something sensible in the way of reward to you two," said Sir Milner. "You've saved the insurance company a loss and me a good deal of inconvenience. Leave that to me. I am glad the dog did so well, Nelson."

"The dog is a topper," declared Ethelred, emphatically. "Hey, Red! Here, boy!"

Red, curled up by Nelson's chair, twitched one pendulous ear and stayed where he was.

Nelson, ever polite, muttered a word and Red Sleuth went unenthusiastically round to Ethelred, as the butler presented to the plump youth a silver dish containing what looked like an extremely expensive preparation largely "featuring" boned duck.

Ethelred did not take a portion—he took the dish.

"Let the dog eat," he exhorted them, and put the dish before the dog.

And the dog ate.

"Ethelred, how extravagant!" chided his mother, gently.

"Oh, I don't know, mother—what's a bit of duck? Uncle Milner don't grudge Nelse's dog a bite of food after helping us—and Nelse—save his ricks! Plenty more ducks at the farm!"

He grinned cheerfully at them all, including the butler.

Sir Milner's usually hard face was quite kindly, even a little indulgent, as he studied his guests. After all, if Ethelred wasn't quite the wiry, hard-bitten, level-headed sportsmanlike little beggar that Nelson was, nevertheless there was something winning about him. He was not so bad—he was bound to be a sportsman, no matter how desperately his mother "spoiled" him. And if he stayed there long Nelson would work some of his portliness off. Sir Milner felt tolerably sure of that.

Nelson ventured a question.

"Shall you have Partridge Johnson caught and locked up, sir?"

Sir Milner reflected.

"Why, Nelson, I hardly know. Would you?"

Nelson thought.

"Well, sir, of course he's out of the district now, and I suppose he'll be afraid to come back, and I—I think it would be a good plan to let him go. He's a very cunning poacher and—and he isn't very much good to the place, sir. It would be a pity to bring him back."

Sir Milner nodded.

"By Jove, you're right, Nelson. We'll let him go. After all, he did no actual harm and he helped give Ethelred an enjoyable day!"

"Enjoyable, Milner—with a wound like that?" said his sister, stiffly.

"Um—er—in a manner of speaking, my dear."

Ethelred supported his sex.

"It was a grand day, mater, grand. And my wound's not so bad that I can't drive Nelse home in the Rolls-Royce presently, if Uncle Milner don't mind."

But it was the chauffeur who did that—Uncle Milner proving to be not much of a believer in having his best car slung along twilight roads by thirteen-year-old heroes—and a wounded one at that.

Emily Booker

By

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
HAROLD COPPING

EMILY BOOKER "did for" people in the village of Little Dole Keynes. Sometimes she "did for" Amardis, the little girl who lived with her grandmother in the cottage called Cooden. Emily Booker did uncommonly well for people, leaving behind her a wake of brightness where she had scrubbed and rubbed and polished. Amardis declared that the cottage was never nicer than after one of Emily Booker's visits. She was a rare cleaner and a good, kind soul. She could cook too—pasties and Sussex wollops and many a savoury dish, the recipes for which existed in the days of the Conqueror.

But, despite the virtue and variety of her gifts, Emily Booker in no way reflected the brightness that followed in her wake. Indeed, it would be no lie to say that she cut a sad figure in village society. Her clothes of rusty black would have been appropriate to the character of Hamlet's aunt—her manner of carrying herself was limp and lifeless, and the expression on her face was one of perpetual melancholy.

The rustic mind is not introspective, neither does it bother itself, to any practical extent, over neighbourly troubles and peculiarities. It accepts the human race on its face value without delving into the mysterious causes which shape that outer mask into the likeness of comedy or pathos. Thus, while accepting Emily Booker's fine quality as a cleaner, as a person of moral rectitude, and as one to whom children could safely be entrusted, they were not slow to express the opinion that in moods of gaiety she was a sorry companion.

Anyone who has already made acquaintance with Amardis will have gathered that although young in years she was wise in experience. Amardis was not content to form her estimates from the slender evidence of external things. So far as in her lay the power, Amardis liked to probe a mystery to its foundations. In her were deep wells of compassion, and the spectacle of sadness in others induced a similar state in herself. She could not bear to see Emily Booker dragging round sorry and woebegone.

The inhabitants of the village of Little Dole Keynes had their troubles like other people, but these they swiftly overcame and returned to their cheerful selves. Now and again there would be quarrellings, bickerings, and beer-inspired fights, but, thanks to a benign alchemy of earth and sun and good-fellowship, these were soon forgotten and forgiven. No other villager had ever gone about as Emily Booker went about, continuously exhibiting an aura of sombre melancholy. The cheerful spirit of that little community had passed her by. It was very strange that this should be so, for rumour, which is the village historian, had it that, before the War, a more high-spirited girl than Emily Booker had never danced upon the Green.

During the War an insatiable industry had rapt Emily Booker away from the gentle surroundings of her birthplace to the din and clangour of a munition works out Portsmouth way. On the signing of the Armistice she had returned, a buxom, not ill-looking woman of twenty-six, with tired eyes, and fingers stained yellow with picric acid.

Being an uncommunicative soul, she spoke no word of her experiences as a munition worker, and, as her neighbours were more interested in hearing themselves talk than in listening to other people, they did not bother to ask for details.

She rented two decent rooms in a cottage

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on the Lewes Road, and earned a modest wage helping and cleaning for the better-to-do residents.

Meanwhile, from all quarters the younger gentry, farmers' lads, tradesmen's sons, and the rest who had been fighting in the War were returning to their native village to pick up the threads of civilian life and plunge hot-headed into matrimony. Never in the history of Little Dole Keynes were there so many eager lovers. The narrow lanes, the cinder tracks, and foot-paths threading devious ways through wood and copse were thronged with clinging couples. Under the stars the rustle of their whisperings and their kisses was constant. Scarcely a day passed without clamorous chimes from church belfry to tell of a wedding.

But in all that great enthusiasm for mating no man came forward and spoke for Emily Booker. It may have been the sombre shadows in her eyes, the want of a knot of ribbon or patch of colour in her gown, discouraged them. After the grim years of War they looked to find their reward in laughing lips and clinging arms.

It occurred to no one that Emily Booker had fought her war too—in the acrid laboratories of a munition works. It occurred to no one that she, too, might be seeking a reward.

"Emily is a proper spinster," they said. "A proper spinster is Emily Booker."

The phrase became a fashion, and, with the unconscious savagery of the primitive, they did not forbear to use it in her presence.

"Come to look back, my dear, you never have had a beau," said one observant cottager for whom Emily Booker was performing some small service at the wash-tub.

Emily said nothing, since that was her habit, but unbeknown to anyone she bit her lip and bowed her head over the suds.

The theme took hold of local imagination and was developed. Women gossiped on doorsteps and men, with guffaws, jested rudely about it in bar parlours.

In the upper strata of the community the popularity of a jest is of short duration, but among simple folks jests, being scarce, are not readily relinquished. For example, old Farmer Trant had once replied to the offer of a cigarette that he did not smoke stationery—a flight of wit that captured public favour so completely that rarely a day passed for years and years that he did not repeat it. Nor did it lose anything from repetition. Once funny, always funny. It will be easily appreciated, therefore, that if a mere turn of phrase, a trick of speech, could survive so long, humour which sprang from a living fact—a truth known and accepted by all—could never rust.

The statement was irrefutable—Emily Booker had never had a sweetheart. She was and always had been a woman without a beau. If that wasn't funny—if the idea of spinsterhood, with its inevitable accompaniment of solitude and male neglect, wasn't enough to make a cat laugh, then what was?

As the years went by, and time robbed the jest of its freshness, the blither spirits came forward to give it a fillip. Thus young Overton, the village wag, picked up for a few pence a stuffed and moth-eaten parrot which, under cover of darkness, he hung over the door of Emily's cottage. The satire of this act required a certain amount of elucidation, but once the idea was grasped the village was swept with a gale of laughter. Of course, a spinster always has a parrot.

"Teach 'em to swear, they does," young Overton explained. "Gives 'em a sense of 'avin' a man about the place."

THAT the attitude adopted towards Emily Booker's celibacy might cause her pain discouraged no one. On the contrary, they felt they were doing her a service in taking so much interest. After all, the poor creature had neither chick nor child to talk about. She was denied taking part in the wifely gossip about husbands—their sins, omissions, and redeeming features—which occupied so much of women's time and thoughts. In their opinion it was very nice for Emily Booker to be such a joke.

A story became current that once she intercepted a wink intended for someone else and, being unfamiliar with that form of introduction, had come forward, with the corner of her handkerchief screwed up, to remove whatever foreign matter had found its way into the young man's eye.

There was not, of course, a vestige of truth in this story, but it lost nothing on that account.

In the presence of a persistent impression about any person or thing it is a very difficult matter to form and maintain a contrary view. Thus, in spite of a habit of making up her own mind, independent of common opinion, about this, that, or the other, Amardis instinctively accepted the local ruling that Emily Booker was a "proper spinster."

It must not be thought that Amardis engaged in the malicious sport prevailing among the rustic population. She merely accepted the definition of Emily Booker in the same way as she accepted the fact that Farmer Trant was a "gran' old fella," that George Masters was a "lot too fond of his glass," and that poor Lollie Edwards "was a lunatic, pore boy." An entirely fortuitous circumstance was responsible for Amardis's stumbling upon the truth and bringing

Her attention shifted to the profile of Emily Booker, where she stood for a moment by the window of the front room.

about the *coup* which annihilated the local tradition.

Amardis's grandmother, Mrs. Mead, had hired Emily to help at the spring cleaning, and loyally and thoroughly had Emily fulfilled her task. The furniture of Sussex oak shone as mirrors under the magic of her touch, and the glories of the newly-scoured pots and pans of copper in the kitchen were only rivalled by the fiery brilliance of the sun sinking to rest behind the silhouette of Chanctonbury Ring.

Spring had followed Emily Booker's course through the four rooms of the cottage called Cooden, and she alone seemed to have stayed in the gloom of winter.

AMARDIS was in the kitchen washing some very particular vases, and her attention, wandering from her task, shifted to the profile of Emily Booker, where she stood for a moment by the window of the front room. The kindly glow of sunset had lent to her features an unusual warmth. Only her expression seemed cold and lost.

Amardis said to herself :—

"That's all it is—her expression. If she were to smile—to light up a bit—she would be quite a handsome woman."

Amardis had never before noticed that the contours of the "proper spinster's" form were generous, rounded, and motherly. She thought—it's a nice body—a nice comfortable body; though there was little blame for anyone failing to observe its merits under that forlorn garment of rusty black.

Emily Booker in that moment of idleness was curiously still. To Amardis it seemed that she scarcely breathed. Her eyes, with their shadowy sadness, rested on the roadway as though held by magnetic force.

Raising herself on tiptoe, Amardis followed the direction of Emily's gaze and saw, rounding the bend in the road, two lovers with arms and fingers intertwined. Just an ordinary pair of lovers they were, of a kind to be seen on any spring evening when the coral of dusk is melting into grey. Two plain young people made beautiful by love. Slowly they approached and, by common consent, paused, hesitant, before the gate. Then something flared up in them, and with no word spoken the boy caught the girl to him and kissed her with all the ardour of his youth. The kiss over, he drew her more tightly to his side and they passed on out of sight.

"Nice to be like that—lovely to be like that," Amardis thought, and found once more that she was looking at Emily Booker. But this time it was an Emily Booker transformed—a new Emily, from whose face sombre rigidity had fled. In that instant Amardis saw in her features an epitome of tenderness, love, and devotion. It was like being present at a revelation of all the lovers and mothers of the world.

From the grey, sad woman's throat came a stifled sob and the two words repeated :—

"Oh, why—oh, why?"

With utter abandon, Emily Booker fell to her knees beside a basket chair and, throwing out her arms, picked up Sally, who was an old fat spaniel belonging to Amardis, and strained her to her breast with little mother noises too intimate for any but a child to hear. Sally, who was a woman too, and understanding, only raised the smallest complaint. For fully half a minute they remained so, the woman with the old brown spaniel held in a fast embrace. As swiftly as the mood had come it vanished, and with a roughness totally unexpected Emily Booker pushed Sally away and, dragging the back of her hand across her eyes, exclaimed, angrily :—

"It's no use—no use."

Before she had time to stop herself Amardis had run into the room and spoken.

"Miss Booker—I'm sure it is some use—what isn't any use? Do please tell me."

For a frightened instant Emily Booker looked guiltily to right and left as in search of a way of escape, but, finding none, dropped her head into the crook of her arm and abandoned herself to a storm of tears.

In all her life Amardis had never beheld such a complete and utter collapse, but she knew instinctively that when once a woman starts to cry in that fashion she will not stop until the wells are dry. The time was not ripe for comfort, so, pushing the sobbing Emily into the basket chair, Amardis ran into the kitchen and prepared a nice hot cup of tea, which she brought to Emily Booker with a bun in the saucer.

Now there is something about a nice hot cup of tea with a bun in the saucer that is infinitely soothing, and presently Emily Booker, with an occasional catch of the breath and little steamy sighs, began to sip.

"You're a kind, motherly girl, Miss Amardis," she said, "kind and good, and everyone knows it."

And Amardis said :—

"I want you to tell me why you are so unhappy."

And the restraint of years vanished, and Emily Booker spoke of her grief simply and without reserve.

"I'm a loving woman, miss," she said, "and that's where it is—a loving woman. But the good God 'asn't thought fit to give me man nor child of me own to cherish. You've 'eard what's said o' me in the village—a woman that's never 'ad a sweetheart, and it's no less than the truth. As a gell I didn't bother me 'ead over such things as

wooin' and courtin'. I 'ad 'igh spirits, strength, and a likin' for me own company. Plenty o' time for the rest, I thought, later on. I was 'appy runnin' the countryside and 'elpin' ole Uncle Jim with 'is cows. An' then—you're almos' too young to remember it—but there's been a war, y'know—*the* War, and of a sudden everythin' was changed. The boys 'ad become men waitin' to fight and the men soldiers fightin'. And somethin' changed in me, too, through that change in them—for—it's 'ard to find words to put—for all they 'ad grown up it seemed to me they'd grown 'elpless like children wantin' someone. An' I wanted to put me arms roun' every one of 'em and say—' It's all right, old man, we'll wait for you—we'll carry on while you're over there.' I reckon I on'y felt what millions of other women was feeling and on'y wanted to say what millions of others was sayin' every day. But neither boy nor man come to my arms, though they went to the arms of them others as natural as a dawg to his kennel. Well, I was too young to see as somethin' 'ad been left out o' me—the somethin' that draws a man to a woman. I was too young to ask meself what it was 'ad been left out. That knowledge on'y come in after years. No chap asked me to wait, so I packs up and clears out into munitions. An' there the same 'appens again. P'r'aps I 'ad bad luck bein' on explosives. Funny stuff to 'andle, miss—makes your eyes go anxious and it's cruel for your skin—your looks. If I'd been on cappin' small arms stuff, I dare say I'd 'ave shown up lively at the end of a shift as though I'd been doin' dairy work. Well, no good goin' into that. But some of them girls! Why, chaps was fallin' over themselves to win so much as a smile, and them not serious neither — not a thought for the future—not like me, thinkin', thinkin' of all I might do for a fellar and of 'ow—well, you know—dreams." She stopped and rubbed her forehead hopelessly.

Amardis said nothing. Elbows on knees, chin on cupped hands, she sat listening.

Then Emily Booker told of her return to the village of Little Dole Keynes.

"Wasn't till then, with all the marryin' goin' on aroun' me, I learned the truth about myself and the truth about men."

"Yes?" said Amardis. "Tell me."

Emily Booker shook her head.

"It won't mean nothing to you," she said, "but it's the truth for all that. Men are competing creatures—competing creatures—they on'y want what they think others want—an' they on'y leave alone what others 'ave no use for. If I 'ad 'ad a sweetheart I could 'ave 'ad a dozen sweethearts—but 'avin' none I could 'ave none. No one 'ad spoke for me, and because o' that no one would. It didn't take 'em long to find it out when I came back, and they shut the last door of 'ope by brandin' me a proper spinster."

Emily Booker leant forward with clenched hands and said, in a voice shaken with emotion :—

"As sure as there is a Heaven above there is no more lovin' woman at 'eart than Emily Booker. I'd work my fingers to the bone for a man I could call my own. I'd sit up and never close eyelids for a week for a child that'd call me mother. And 'stead o' that I'm the proper spinster of Little Dole Keynes—the woman with a parrot over 'er door, and as I live so I'll die—and the sooner the better."

THE room had become very dark when Emily Booker came to the end of her confession. The sky, which had been dappled with clouds of amber and beryl, now was a silver grey. Amardis drew a long, staggering breath.

"Then it isn't for any one man you are eating out your heart?" she whispered.

Emily Booker shook her head.

"One can love all mankind, miss. The Book teaches us that. We mortals wasn't put on earth to leave nothin' behind us."

"No," said Amardis, "no." A gleam of inspiration dawned at the back of her mind. "And men are——". she was going to say competitive, but altered the word to "competing creatures."

"They're all alike," the woman nodded.

Amardis screwed up her small face in an agony of concentration. Somewhere in her subtle brain a scheme was forming based on a phrase of Emily Booker's—a phrase she could not quite recall. It came back to her suddenly as though a curtain had been thrown aside, and, springing to her feet, she cried :—

"There's been a war, y'know—that's it—there's been a war."

Emily Booker turned her tear-stained eyes upon the eager young face.

"What of that, miss?"

"Why, it's everything—don't you understand? You were away from this village for four years. No one here saw or heard from you all that time. Why, Miss Booker, it's wonderful—don't you see?"

Emily Booker shook her head.

"All you've got to do when next they chaff you about being a spinster is simply to smile to yourself and say, only just loud enough to be heard: 'There's been a war, you know.'"

With slow movements Emily rose and brushed the crumbs from her lap.

"I must be goin', miss." She stopped and

Elbows on knees, chin on cupped hands, Amardis sat listening.

bit her lip, and added: "I didn't think you'd laugh at me."

"But I'm not, I'm not," Amardis insisted, "I'm frightfully serious. Please, Miss Booker, try saying that. You don't know how simple people are—how they imagine and invent. I've a feeling that everything would come right if only you'd give it a try."

"But what's it mean, miss?"

"Anything they care to make it mean. A sweetheart, heaps of sweethearts perhaps, or perhaps a husband who was killed."

Emily Booker frowned deeply.

"I've never yet told a lie," she said.

"But you wouldn't have to tell a lie. It isn't a lie to say there's been a war. They'll fill in the rest—not you."

"Well, I never!" said Emily Booker. "I never did in all my life!"

"Promise me—promise to give it a trial."

For a while Emily was silent, but presently she nodded her head three times.

"I'll think it over, miss."

"You darling," said Amardis, and hugged her fast. Then, holding her at arms' length: "And if it does show signs of working out all right, it wouldn't be a bad idea if you—came out of mourning and tried to smile again."

IT was to Mrs. Overton, the mother of Ted Overton, the village wag, that Emily Booker made the fateful experiment. Lest she should have forgotten the fact, Mrs. Overton reminded Emily that she was a proper spinster. It was then that Emily spoke the words and smiled and turned away her head.

"What was that you said?" demanded the old lady. "What—what did you say?"

But Emily had been too well coached in her new character of a mysterious romantic to fall into the error of repeating herself. She collected the black bag of American cloth which contained her apron and passed out of the cottage without a word.

Mrs. Overton, curious as a magpie, hopped after her as far as the gate and stared at the retreating Emily in her dress of solemn black which had suddenly assumed a new significance.

Now Mrs. Overton was no fonder of walking than is any other woman of seventy-eight years, but, this fact notwithstanding, she made a tour of the village with an alacrity no one would have supposed possible. Not readily would she have relinquished the satisfaction of being first to spread the amazing rumour. At the first few cottages she did little more than repeat the conversation which had taken place in its actual form, but as fatigue told upon her aged limbs each subsequent visit became more and more protracted, which put her to the necessity of embroidering the facts with alleged confidences that had been made to her, and private opinions which hitherto discretion had forced her to withhold.

"If I'm no good for nuthin' else," she said, "at least I can reckernize signs of a broken 'eart. I never 'ave believed Emily was a natural spinster, 'cause I 'appen to know, by ways that 'ave nothin' to do wi' anyone else, that it was at Wipers he fell. An' a 'andsomer lad," she added, "never joined the Colours."

From a cottage kitchen to the bar parlour news travels swiftly. Within an hour of Mrs. Overton's first visit the romance of Emily Booker was the sole topic of conversation.

Henry Wigley, who had served as a corporal in the East Sussex Regiment, darkly hinted a personal acquaintance with Emily's sweetheart. It appeared that a voice cried out her name in the delirium of battle—a voice suddenly choked by a sob of pain.

"'Emily,' he says—and again 'Emily.' Then that shell bursts an' all was silent."

From behind a blue cloud of tobacco smoke someone inquired, sceptically:—

"'Ow d'you know it were Emily Booker 'e meant?"

"'Ow d'you know it weren't?" was the unanswerable retort.

Old Ned Parkin, the cowman, rumbled low over his pint.

"That pore soul 'as the look o' lorst love in her face, an' if I've said that once I've said it a 'underd times."

He hadn't, but no one denied it.

"'Tis a grand shame for a woman like that to die single," said Wigley. "Still, no man wants to obtrude on a woman's sorrer."

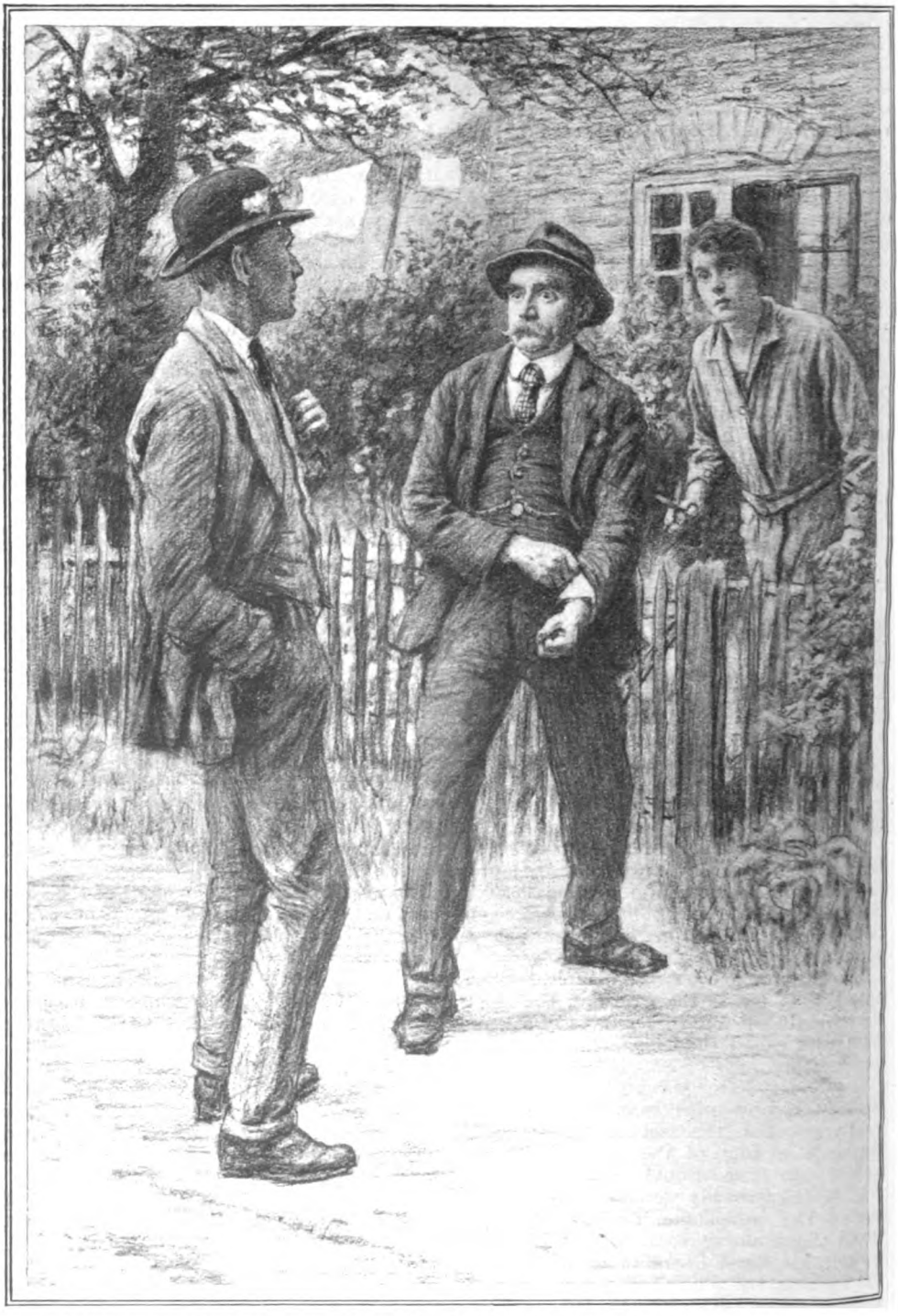
It was Franklin, the landlord of the Goat and Compass, himself a widower and a man of substance, who voiced the first word of personal praise about Emily.

"Cooks beautiful, she does," said he. "Cooks to beat the French—and clean! Why, you could eat your dinner off of that woman's 'ands."

Others, developing the theme, put it on record that she was "wifely built" and "comely," and, apart from a certain sadness of mien which a little male company would surely relieve, "was as well featured as any woman in the parish."

Abandoning his usual custom of staying in the bar until closing time, Franklin, the landlord, handed over to the pot-boy, and, putting on a clean collar, his Sunday tie, and a trustworthy cigar, went for a stroll down the Lewes Road.

He was surprised to find quite a number of loungers were similarly employed, and



"Any more o' that manner o' talk," said Mr. Franklin, "and I'll use you as a broom to sweep out yon cow-yard."

it was some while before he found himself alone in that usually deserted thoroughfare. Drawing near the cottage where Emily Booker lodged, he was rejoiced to observe that she was in the front garden cutting off dead blossoms with a pair of rusty scissors. She was unaware of the approach of Mr. Franklin, who, being a cautious man, did not announce himself, but paused in the roadway to inspect under favourable conditions. Now Mr. Franklin, like many another good publican, had gone through life with his feet well planted on the ground and his head untroubled by poetic fancy. Thus it was strange that he should have discovered in Emily's occupation a curiously suggestive significance. For was she not clearing her garden of death and decay to give space to new beauties and enchantments? The idea captured his imagination to such an extent that he failed at once to notice that Emily had cast aside her customary black and was wearing a print overall of a most agreeable colour. Realization of this wonder came upon him so suddenly as to excite an imprecation of amazement.

"Well, dang me!" he said.

Emily Booker turned her head and nodded.

"Evenin', Mr. Franklin."

MR. FRANKLIN came a step nearer over ground that seemed to tremble. An unfamiliar agitation put him to the need of rasping his throat mercilessly. Lost for something to say, he remarked:—

"I were just takin' a stroll along."

"It's beautiful out," Emily Booker replied, and, feeling her knees beginning to go, sat down suddenly on an inverted rain-barrel.

Taking his courage in both hands, Mr. Franklin stepped boldly to the gate, and, resting his elbows upon it, blurted out:—

"That War were a terrible thing."

At those words the soul of Emily Booker went soaring up to heaven.

"So it were, but that's old history," she replied, with admirable indifference.

The landlord of the Goat and Compass pushed his hat off his forehead.

"Secret history belike," said he, darkly.

"There was plenty about it in the papers at the time," she answered.

"Maybe some of it never got as far as the papers," he said, and added: "never got no farther than a woman's 'eart."

"Then it wouldn't be no one else's affair," said Emily, "for if a woman's 'eart isn't private, what is?"

Mr. Franklin was amazed at the agility of her defence. Why, dang him, he had thought she had no mind above wet dough and a basin of soap-suds. In such company a man would have to keep his wits sharpened. He was searching his mind for a suitable reply when the rasp of nailed boots on the roadway caused him to turn his head.

Swinging along towards the cottage, a dog-rose in his hat and a thumb hooked in the armhole of his waistcoat, came Ted Overton.

"Gran' spring weather, Miss Booker," he hailed. "Would you care for a turn along the road?"

Emily Booker made no reply—somehow she couldn't—a circumstance that Mr. Franklin took as a compliment unto himself.

"Time enough to ask sech favours," said he, "when you've gorn on your knees to this lady and begged pardon for persecootin' 'er."

Emily Booker found her voice.

"I think not, Ted Overton, but thank you all the same."

"Which'll take you off, young fellar," said Franklin, none too pleasantly.

Ted Overton gave his hat a sharp tap on the crown.

"You aren't king o' the Lewes Road, Tom Franklin," said he, "for all of wearing a Sunday tie on a week-day."

Mr. Franklin turned heavily, giving his coat-sleeves a suggestive switch.

"Any more o' that manner o' talk," said he, "and I'll use you as a broom to sweep out yon cow-yard."

"You'll do a lot," said Ted Overton, casting off his coat and weaving professionally in the roadway.

"Not so much nuther," was the retort. "I don't need unbutton for the likes o' you."

Three minutes later the little girl who delivered the groceries, breathless and scarlet of cheek, was hammering at the door of the cottage where Amardis lived.

"Oh, miss, come quick!" she pleaded, as the door was thrown open. "Awful things is 'appenin'. Two men—young Overton — Mister Franklin — fightin' — fightin' some'in' terrible."

"Fighting! But what are they fighting for?" gasped Amardis.

"F'r Emily Booker."

"La de-da de-da de-da," sang Amardis, and danced on the gravel path.

THIS ASTOUNDING CASE IS FACT—NOT FICTION.

CASES FROM MY CRIME-BOOK

THE "EYE OF THE POLICE."
Badge of Parisian Detectives.

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. XIII. THE TATTOOED MEN.

I ARRIVED at the steep stairs leading to the technical police laboratories just as those detectives who had been on duty all night were leaving for a welcome spell of rest after making their report. The first one to greet me was my old friend Rousseau. He looked tired, and his eyes were red from want of sleep.

"I've been waiting for you," he growled. "The chief has asked me to take you to the Avenue du Roule before I go off duty. So hurry up and get your 'conjurer's box'; you'll find me at the Café du Palais. I'm thirsty—very, and black coffee, with something strong in it, will help me to finish my full twenty-four hours."

I whistled thoughtfully. "Twenty-four hours, you say—without sleep! Something big, then, eh? What do you want me to bring?"

"I don't know about big—just a curious case. You'll want your Bertillon outfit and an assistant with cameras. I'll tell you about it as we drive there. Shall I order something for you at the *café*?"

"No; I'll come over at once with a car and pick you up."

Ten minutes later I hailed my colleague, who was hurriedly refreshing himself, and we settled down for the long drive to the suburb he had named.

BERTILLON'S "CONJURER'S BOX."

I HAD taken one of the compact little cases invented by our chief, which contained everything useful for an investigation, the "conjurer's box," as Rousseau familiarly called it, whilst my assistant, seated beside the driver, carried cameras and magnesium lamp.

"Now, old friend, what is it?" I asked, curiously.

"Oh, a fellow has been poisoned. He was found in that cut-throat place called the Hôtel Malher. The doctor is there waiting for us. Strangely enough, I've been watching the place for a week now, because we have had some bad reports about it. This morning, about four o'clock, a

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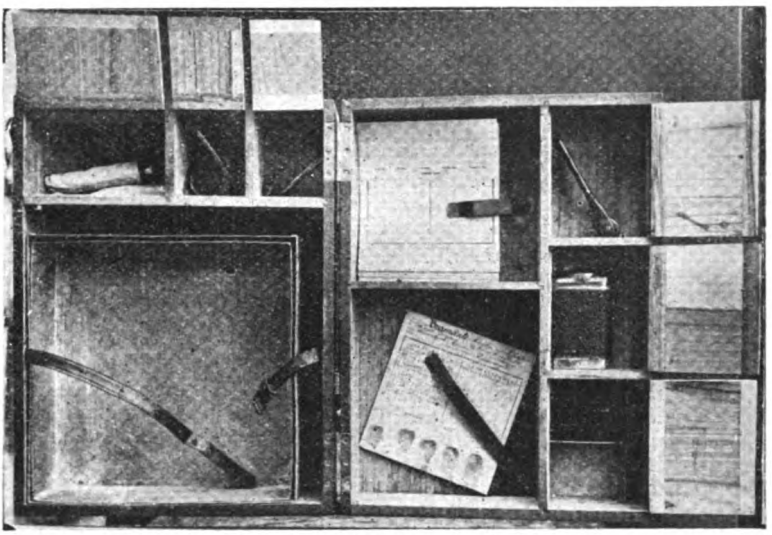


Bertillon's "Conjurer's Box."
It contains everything necessary for a rapid investigation.

woman rushed out shrieking for help. We were inside, Louys and I, before La Chouanne, a horrible, ferocious Algerian woman who owns the place, could slam the door. Even then some of the beauties who make the hotel their headquarters would have thrown us out, but we had several cycle police handy. Unfortunately, the sudden alarm was unexpected, and by the time we obtained reinforcements most of the inmates had disappeared. The place has a dozen convenient exits. In a room at the top of the house we found a man lying on the floor. He was naked to the waist and covered with an extraordinary network of tattooing. Quite dead, too — poisoned, I think. The strange part is that a piece of skin about four inches square has been cut from his back. By the appearance of the wound, the beastly work had been done only minutes previously. The chief thinks that some sign, or the mark of a secret society, has been torn away. The man's whole body is covered with the most fantastic symbols. Obviously he was once in the African penal battalions——"

"Biribi?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, of course, Biribi or the Bat d'Af; where they send those who commit a crime before they are due for military service. Such tattooing is a mania with them."

"What poison was used, and who was the woman who gave the alarm?" I inquired.

"The doctor will probably know the poison; as for the woman, she is a decent little dressmaker, so far as I have been able to ascertain. Here we are."

I looked out and saw that the car had drawn up before a large, dingy, squalid hotel. On each side were narrow alleys admirably adapted for an escape from the back doors and windows. The place had once been a private dwelling and was centuries old. Now the large black letters across the frontage proclaimed it to be the "Hôtel Malher. Wedding dinners and *fêtes* a speciality."

Jules Brique, with the skin ripped from his back, photographed after death.

THE MUTILATED TATTOOING.

IN a tiny room under the roof, where two uniformed police stood on guard, a man sprawled face down on the grimy boards. He was clad only in baggy trousers and ragged shoes; but under him were the half of a shirt and vest of which the upper part had been ripped away, exposing the arms and back. Curious childish designs in blue and red covered the man's body, but just between the shoulders a square of purple flesh streaked with blood

showed where a piece of skin had been cut and torn out.

" You see," said Rousseau, " the lines of coagulated blood prove that the man was not dead when this brutal act was committed, but no doubt he was already unconscious."

My first care was to take imprints of the dead man's hands. Then, when a photograph of the room and the body had been made, the doctor turned the fellow over and examined him attentively.

Rousseau's opinion was confirmed—the man had been killed by the absorption of some violent poison. The twisted face proclaimed that its action had been almost instantaneous, but for the moment the doctor was unable to say what the poison was. A broken glass which had rolled under the bed was carefully packed. We hoped that an analysis of the liquid it had contained, of which a sticky residue still adhered to the inside, would reveal traces of the deadly drug. Meanwhile, Rousseau had been thoughtfully studying the table and chairs.

La Chouanne,
in Bedouin dress. A photograph found in the Hôtel Malher.

" I imagine there were three or four people present when the crime was committed," he said, pointing to the empty bottles and glasses. " And they were friends of the dead man. These rooms generally contain only one chair. The others here were fetched for the meeting or carouse which took place. We'll see from which rooms they were obtained."

The landlady, a bold, handsome Algerian, whose cunning beady eyes belied the friendliness of her oily, ingratiating manner, was waiting on the landing as we came out. Rousseau gave sharp orders to the police, who at once seized her firmly by the arms and held her there whilst we hurriedly entered room after room. Two of them lacked chairs, but the indignant proprietress asserted vehemently that the rooms had not been occupied the previous night. She volunteered the statement that the murdered man had only arrived the day before and had taken a room for himself and the girl who had given the alarm. She suggested, viciously, that it was probably his sweetheart who had killed the fellow, since none of her usual tenants were capable of such a wicked deed. At this sally Rousseau merely shrugged his shoulders, for he was well aware of the kind of brutes who usually sought refuge in the infamous hotel. Although we harassed her with questions, the woman answered them so cleverly that we realized it was useless to insist, and in despair Rousseau finally ordered La Chouanne to be taken to headquarters, where an examining magistrate would formally interrogate her. We then left together, after placing an officer on guard in the room, and I immediately made my report to M. Bertillon.

A photograph of the dead man was circulated at the Sûreté, and Sergeant Moreau, a police officer who had served many years in Africa, informed Dufresne that the picture resembled a former African soldier and desperado named Jules Brique, who had been a noted " Zephir," as the worst types among the soldiers in the penal battalions are nicknamed. Brique had been in the road gangs at Kenifra, in Morocco, whilst Sergeant Moreau was there. He remembered vaguely that some rumour had circulated about the escape of Brique and several cronies, but that they had been recaptured by Arab military police and court-martialled.

A search of the records proved Moreau to be right. The strangely tattooed man was indeed Jules Brique. He had been sentenced for highway robbery before he was twenty, and consequently sent to Biribi when the time for military service came, since in France a criminal may not serve in the regular army. M. Bertillon thoughtfully studied the enlarged photographs which I had made of the tattooing, and compared them one by one with those which the police had taken when the man was first arrested.

THE PUZZLE OF THE MISSING TATTOO MARK.

" MOST of these designs were added later," Bertillon said, finally. " The earlier photographs show that there was a blank space just at the spot where the skin has been cut away. Whatever the marks were which the man or men who killed Brique were anxious to destroy, they were the result of something which happened whilst he was in Morocco. The girl who ran screaming into the street declares that she had only known the man about a year. She insists that he was steady, hard-working, and honest. But he never stayed long in the same neighbourhood. They had moved constantly from one hotel to another, as though Brique had lived in perpetual fear of an enemy. The room in which the man was found was not theirs, for they had lived

on the floor below. The night of the tragedy they had returned early. Towards morning she had been suddenly roused from deep sleep by the sound of a heavy fall and a loud groan. Terrified and only half awake, she had struck a match, and instantly realized that she was alone. The girl had thereupon rushed upstairs and entered the room from which she thought the noise had come. To her horror she saw her companion lying on the floor as we found him. The door of the room was wide open, but she had seen no one else nor heard any further sound. It was then that she had run into the street and called wildly for help.

"A mysterious business," M. Bertillon concluded. "What have you found?"

"A few finger-prints, but they are not clear, and only single ones at that," I replied, showing my chief some gelatine transfers.

"Well, we must wait. This hotel is a veritable den of murderers and thieves. Rousseau and Colbert have been regularly on duty in the vicinity. We have, nevertheless, released the Algerian woman. I wish to give them rope enough. If you are not busy, you may go and keep your friends company."

For several days and nights the hotel was always under observation, and we carefully noted the many sinister ruffians who permanently loafed about the alleys or drank in the long, dimly-lit taproom. The doctor had reported that the poison in the wine the man had drunk was unknown to him, nor was the Sûreté analyst, Lebrun, able to identify it. Dufresne finally decided to raid the Hôtel Malher, since we had obtained no further results, when one morning M. Bertillon requested me to come to his office immediately. I found him in consultation with two of the river police.

THE MURDER OF A SECOND TATTOOED MAN.

"HERE is another link in the chain," he said the moment I entered. "I have sent a messenger to fetch Rousseau. Go along with him to the Quai de Bercy and have a look at the poor devil who was fished from the river at dawn. From what Laboué here reports, he is another of these tattooed men, and a piece of skin is also missing from his back. This is becoming queer. If you discover anything further, telephone to me and I will come down at once."

I hastily gathered my implements and drove to the Quai Bercy with my colleague. The drowned man had been temporarily taken to a shed where empty wine-barrels were usually stored.

At sight of him Rousseau exclaimed in surprise:—

"Look! He was not drowned at all. The fellow has been strangled and then mutilated in the same manner as Brique."

An examination of the body convinced me that Rousseau was not mistaken. A blue weal showed where a thin cord—or, what was more likely, a length of wire—had been tightly twisted round the neck. This time the man had been undressed to the waist. His body was covered with elaborate tattooing, and again a piece of skin had been ripped from his back just between the shoulders. Whilst we were waiting for M. Bertillon one of the river police came in with some clothes which had been brought up by the drag near the spot where the body was found. A piece of steel rope was tied around the bundle and a coil of lead piping had been added to make it sink.

"That is probably the wire which strangled him," Rousseau said. "Let's see what is in the pockets."

The parcel proved to contain a shirt and a jacket of coarse fustian—obviously they were the clothes which had been taken from the victim. In one pocket we found a sheet of tracing paper such as draughtsmen use, whilst in another was a limp and torn fragment of carbon paper. Both were, of course, soaked and discoloured. Rousseau gave a grunt of disgust.

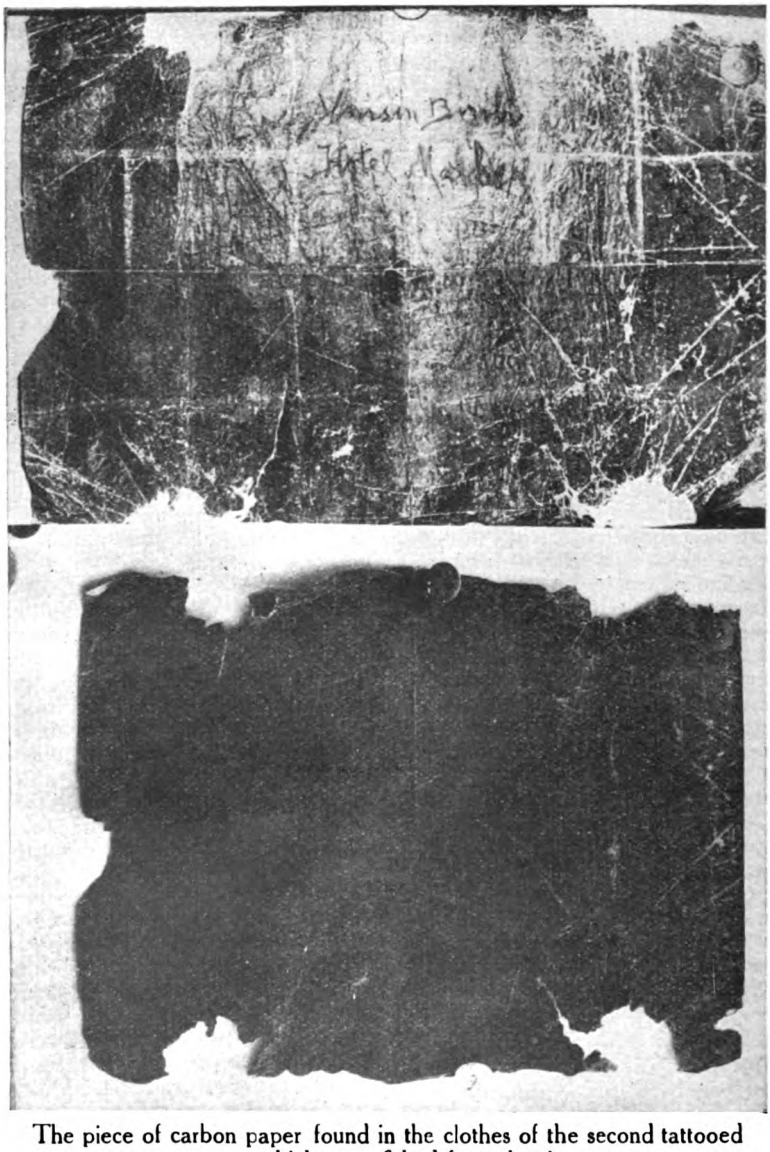
"Nothing there to help us, I'm afraid, but we'll spread both pieces near the stove to dry. Perhaps Bertillon can find something."

My chief when he arrived was extremely interested in this strange repetition of a crime for which the motive was still a complete mystery. He stood for a long time closely studying the body, then with a shrug turned to me and said:—

"Let me have those two sheets when they are dry, and a photograph of the man. Obviously he is another of the band. When I know who he is I'll communicate with Kenifra. Have the body removed for a *post-mortem*."

THE TRACING-PAPER CLUE.

I CARRIED the two precious scraps of paper to the laboratory, and the afternoon was spent in applying every test and artifice that we could devise. The tracing paper was the first to give any result. A repeated and gradual enlargement of the photographic plates, each one intensified and copied from the previous one, slowly disclosed a series of faint lines. When these were again enlarged they assumed the definite shape of a head, with several apparently meaningless letters beside it.



The piece of carbon paper found in the clothes of the second tattooed man which were fished from the river.

Above : The same paper after it had been specially treated. The words, "Voisin Biribi, Hôtel Malher," can now be clearly seen.

"That is intended to portray a lion's head," my chief said, "but a lion's head cut in stone. Look, it has a curious vague resemblance to the sphinx. Those letters are probably a secret language, or I should say a conventional language with a hidden meaning. By Jove! I believe this is a tracing of the tattooing which was on the drowned man's back! He must have been ignorant of its appearance himself, and someone copied it for him by placing that thin sheet on his skin. The pencil marks were obliterated by the immersion in the river, but the point was very sharp and left a rough surface where it passed. Now let us see what is on the carbon paper. That was intended to reproduce the design more clearly from the tracing. It's a wonder the men who committed the crime did not destroy these clues."

"They threw the clothes into the water and probably considered that to be sufficient," I ventured. M. Bertillon nodded assent.

Microphotographs were made of the broken, cracked surface of the carbon sheet. It was arduous work, and required several days to complete it. The numerous prints were then joined together until they looked like a huge puzzle, but across the top in faint disjointed letters ran the words:—

"Voisin Biribi
Hôtel Malher."

"And that's another link in the chain," said M. Bertillon when I showed him the result. "And perhaps the name of the murderer. For the moment the copy of the tattooing is useless to us. If it means anything, we cannot solve it. Telephone to Calorbier at the records and ask him to look up Voisin or Voisin Biribi."

An hour later a messenger brought us several charts and photographs marked "Voisin, known as Biribi." It was a brutish, degenerate face which we saw, and again

the most elaborate tattooing covered the body. Bertillon looked at the dates on the cards.

"What luck!" he cried, excitedly. "This fellow was photographed when arrested for theft before he served in Africa. But he was also photographed again a year ago in Marseilles—when he was caught in a raid; and something has been added between his shoulders. '*Malheurauxtraitres*' written as one word, and that means 'Death to traitors.' They have been too clever. There was no need to tattoo the sentence as one word unless——"

"It's the key to their transposed letters," I interrupted, excitedly.

M. Bertillon smiled at my eagerness.

"I feel sure that's what it is. So, if we find any more tattooed men, we'll be able to read their secret. Now let's see what the letters mean which we found on the tracing paper."

Although they were far from clear, I could dimly make out the following jumble to the left of the crude lion's head:—

'Rmglaelttmreeilaeemtturaé mlel——"

For some minutes Bertillon's pencil was busy, then with a smile he threw the result of his labour across to me and I read:—

"Marcher plage rocher alligné avec——"

[Walk beach rock in line with——]

"Read, '*Walk along beach until rock is in line with—lion's head,*'" Bertillon prompted. "That is obviously what it means. You see where the man with the needle stopped every time he came to a fresh word, although they appear to run together—and the picture of the stone which looks like the sphinx completes the sentence with the pictograph 'lion's head' or 'sphinx's head.'

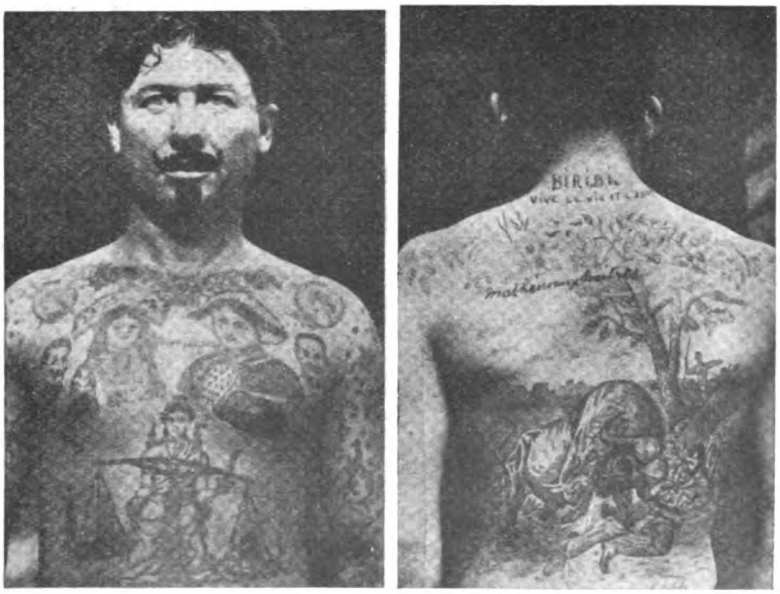
"Well, we are not much nearer the solution yet, but we know a lot more than before. If only we could discover more of these tattooings! But already I begin to see daylight, and I'll write to the commander at Kenifra at once. Something valuable is hidden on a beach. We can gather that, anyhow."

"But why were these men murdered?" I questioned.

"Oh, the usual thing. There are probably a number of them. Each has a part of the secret on his back—and one or several want to cheat the others of their share. Probably it has been so arranged that individually they do not know what the signs mean. I cannot understand, however, why they have taken such trouble to efface the marks by cutting the skin away. Perhaps someone else is after the secret, too. It was not fear of the police that made them do it. At all events, it was a foolish trick. Had it not been for the missing pieces of skin we should never have guessed at the truth."

DISGUISED AS RUFFIANS.

EVENTS now began to move quickly. Bertillon's discovery had been carefully kept secret, but a smart reporter seized on the coincidence of the tattooing and the missing skins to write a clever, witty article about the two crimes, and he had come very near the truth, although he merely suggested that the men had been members of a secret society. The *Matin* also printed a semi-humorous article about "Art in the underworld," and the public began to take an interest in the case. Inspector Louys and I had gone to the Hôtel



Police photographs of Voisin Biribi.

Note the key-word on his back, "Malheurauxtraitres" (Death to Traitors).

Malher, dressed as ruffians, and taken rooms there. We spent our time quarrelling and drinking with the noisome scum, who, although they never worked, always appeared well provided with money. La Chouanne, the horrible impudent shrew who owned the place, was very suspicious of us at first; but when we returned from two feigned nocturnal expeditions with abundant funds, and I accidentally dropped a parcel on the stairs the second time, so that it disgorged a jemmy and some skeleton keys, she ran to pick them up and whispered with a leer, "Don't be afraid, boys—I'll not inform the 'flics' (police), but you must take a bag in future; suppose that parcel had come undone in the street"—and she cackled wickedly at the sally.

From that moment we were free of the bandits' lair and able to come and go unchallenged. We had seen no sign of Voisin Biribi nor of any men bearing the unmistakable hall-mark of the African soldier; but there were two rooms at the rear of the hotel which were always shut, and we had observed La Chouanne carrying food on a tray to that part of the house. An invalid lady, she explained with a grin to Louys. One or two of the ruffians from the bar seemed always to be lounging aimlessly about near the doors, but if either Louys or I attempted to pass they would crowd together with fierce scowls. We had tried several times to lure them away with an offer of drinks, which was never refused, but when we again passed the passage leading to that part of the house, growling voices warned us that others had taken their place. We soon discovered that we were not the only inmates of the hotel interested in solving the mystery of those closed rooms.

One night we crept down the stairs, carrying our burglars' tools in case we were seen. At the corner of the passage, which was dimly lit by a tiny lamp, we came unexpectedly on a curious group. The landlady was talking hurriedly in whispers to two stalwart, fierce-looking Arabs. Even in the gloom we perceived that they were not Algerians, but true desert riders—Tuaregs—although they were not dressed in the characteristic blue burnous and veil. But there was no mistaking the haughty gestures, the curved eagle noses, and flashing eyes. I caught the word "Roumis" (foreigners) and saw one of the Tuaregs sweep his hand upwards as though thrusting with a knife. We flattened ourselves against the wall, with hearts thumping, hardly daring to breathe. Fortunately a moment later all three shuffled silently away without looking in our direction. I guessed instantly that these Arabs, of a type rarely, if ever, seen in Paris, were there with a purpose which boded ill for Voisin and his gang. La Chouanne was an Arab, and probably quite willing to betray men of an alien race. It came to me then that these tattooed men had probably committed some vile crime whilst stationed in the desert.

Mr. Ashton-Wolfe and Inspector Louys, disguised as ruffians, stayed at the Hôtel Malher.

THE ROBBERY AT THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S.

THE next morning I at once carried my news to Bertillon. I found him unusually excited, and with him were Dufresne and Rousseau. Bertillon listened to my report in silence, then he placed several photographs on the table before me. They were half-length pictures of men naked to the waist, their skins covered with the most complex tattooing, and photographed so that only their backs were seen. I looked at the pictures in surprise, for they were obviously not police records.

"M. Laverdie came to us yesterday," said Bertillon, "with the complaint that his studio and offices had been broken into. He is the former official photographer of the Foreign Legion at Sidi-bel-Abbes, and has only been established in Paris five years. The entry was made soon after he left, by means of skeleton keys.

"The strange thing is that nothing was stolen; but all his negatives of the last month have been smashed. I requested him to bring me as many prints of those negatives as he could find. There were not many, for all proofs are sent out a week after the sittings. These photographs had been printed but not developed, and thus escaped destruction. M. Laverdie was surprised and amused when a week ago four men came on the same day, and demanded that he should make a picture of their backs. Shortly after the last man had left, a squat, evil-looking ruffian called and said he had been sent by his friends to request the photographer to have proofs ready the next day, and that they would pay an extra charge if necessary. He furthermore inquired if the photographs would be clear, and M. Laverdie showed him one of the negatives. The last man was, of course, Voisin. Laverdie at once recognized the photograph I showed him. Voisin had followed the men and thus learnt what had happened."

The Arabs who followed Voisin and his friends to Paris.

The photograph was found on the man who was killed in the fight at the Hôtel Malher.

"Then you have now a complete sentence?" I asked.

"Not complete; I believe that three fragments are missing. That means there were nine men altogether. Here is what I have:—

"'Fifty kilometres—north-west from Kenifra—walk along beach to rock in line with lion's head—and triangular rock in water — cave under shadow at noon—Latitude . . . one metre from wall . . .'

"Latitude and longitude and another six or seven words are still unknown to us. Voisin has the key word, which we fortunately found. I have sent an urgent telegram to Kenifra. Your report fits in with my theory. Go back to the hotel at once. The presence of the Tuaregs makes immediate action imperative. Watch closely, signal if an emergency arises, and be ready to admit us at three in the morning. I'll see to it that no one can get away. Men will be everywhere soon after dark. The records are searching for those four backs, but without faces or names that will be a long job. They may be dead already. Voisin is without pity and determined to share the hidden loot with no one. But he is terrified of those Arabs, who have probably many allies amongst the Algerian population of that district. That is why he is making all these blunders——"

"Did he kill those men, do you think, monsieur?" Rousseau asked.

Bertillon shrugged his shoulders.

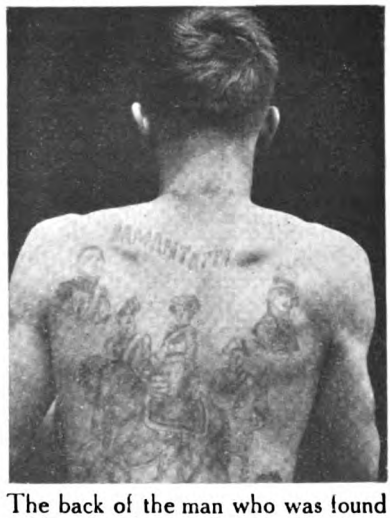
"I don't know. I am inclined to think the Arabs did. That would explain the mutilation. They would naturally wish to prevent Voisin from obtaining the complete message. Then there is the use of an unknown poison; but, frankly, I don't know yet."

A FIGHT IN THE DARK.

I RETURNED with all haste to the filthy hotel, which always filled me with loathing; nor was it altogether pleasant to know that any of the men drinking and

Police guarding the approaches to the Hôtel Malher after the fight.

gambling there would shoot or stab me without the least hesitation. Yet I realized that the Sûreté could not give me more than one companion without alarming the inmates. Fortunately Inspector Louys was a good man — strong and fearless, although small, as all French detectives are. The first rule of the Sûreté is that their men must be inconspicuous, and Dufresne had often grumbled at my size. I thought that the proprietress gave me a queer, intent look as I passed, which set my nerves tingling. Louys was sprawling on a dirty bench, feigning to be drunk and quarrelsome. He began to insult me when I sat down at a table, to the uproarious delight of all present.



The back of the man who was found dying on the beach near Kenifra.

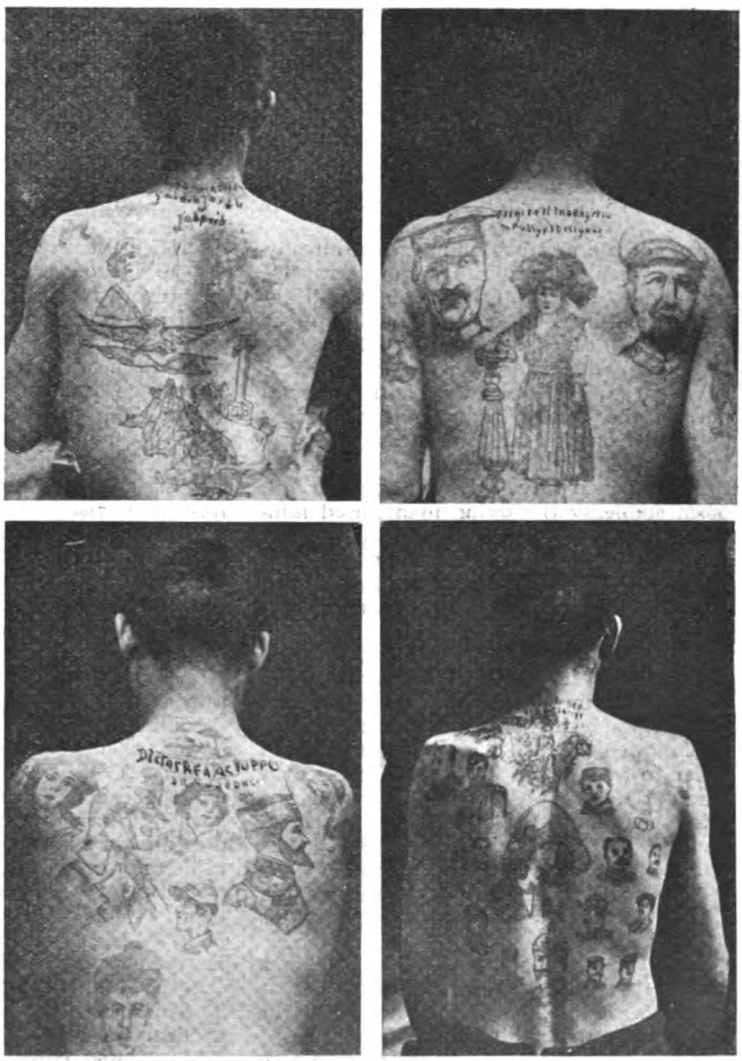
"Here—I'll help you to bed," I retorted. "Come on, we've work to do to-night," and I winked at the landlady. With her help we dragged Louys to his room. Covered by the noise of his apparently drunken monologue, I quickly related the result of my visit to headquarters. We agreed that I should stay downstairs as late as possible, whilst he watched the rear part of the house where the mysterious rooms were.

"They will believe I'm sleeping off the effects of my carouse," he whispered. "It's lucky I can carry liquor, for they watched me closely to see that I really drank. They're a suspicious crowd, and constantly fear treachery even from their own brood."

The Tuaregs were nowhere to be seen, but to my surprise Voisin and two men I had not seen before came into the bar towards evening. Voisin looked older than he appeared on the police records. He was evidently on excellent terms with La Chouanne, and I wondered if he was aware of her intimacy with his enemies. It was a terrible evening I spent, for my senses warned me that every one of the creatures present was inwardly crouching, ready to erupt into violent, deadly action. Their eyes flickered uneasily from side to side; their ears, alert for every sound, twitched like a cat's, and their every word was a snarl. It was like sitting

among some horrible primitive species akin to the gorilla. I was truly glad when towards midnight several of them rose to leave, giving me an excuse to go to my room. Behind me I heard Voisin and his friends stumbling upstairs.

My hand was already turning the door-handle when a wild scream, followed instantly by bestial roars and the thundering reports of several pistol shots, caused my already quivering nerves to contract convulsively. Louys sprang from the passage where he had lain in wait and tumbled down the crazy stairs, yelling to me to follow. For a second I was helpless from the unexpected shock, but the danger to my colleague roused me, and, snatching a weapon from my pocket, I ran after him. The lamp in the passage had been extinguished by the shots, but the light of my electric torch disclosed a struggling, swaying mass of dark panting shapes —cursing, clawing, and stabbing at each other. Louys had reached the street door and wrenched it open, blowing his whistle and barring the way with levelled pistol. Even as I arrived the fighting group split up. I was hurled aside and fell painfully against an iron bed, whilst from below came shots and running feet. Five minutes later police and detectives crowded into the room. Louys helped me to my feet and pointed to a dark, motionless form in the corner. It was one of the Arabs, and we saw that he was mortally wounded. We carried him to the bed and poured some brandy between his lips.



The four tattooed men photographed at their own request by M. Laverdie. The lettering on the necks contained the directions for finding the buried treasure.

"There is one of Voisin's men lying outside," Louys said. "He has been stabbed to the heart. We have caught no one but the woman. If only this fellow can live until Inspector Ben Hassouar gets here! He speaks many Arab dialects."

"I'll try him in French and Spanish," I said. "Have you sent for a doctor?"

"Of course. He'll be here with Dufresne in a moment."

THE TUAREG'S REVENGE.

MEANWHILE we bathed the wounded man's face and rubbed his muscular chest with brandy. Under our vigorous ministrations the Arab revived and

opened tired eyes, but, although we had at once applied wet pads to his wounds, it was clear that he could not live long. I spoke to him in French, but he closed his eyes again and whispered, "No—French—Arab." Fortunately one of the police had called a local doctor, who immediately injected stimulants. I looked at him questioningly.

"Perhaps twenty minutes," he answered, tersely; "certainly not more."

Five of the precious minutes had already elapsed when we heard the roar of a powerful car, and to our relief Inspector Ben Hassouar, a full-blooded Arab, although brought up in Paris, came in hurriedly, followed by Dufresne and Rousseau.

We sat and listened to the harsh guttural purr of the Tuareg, as without prompting he poured out his tale, whilst our colleague wrote rapidly. I remember idly noting that his pencil travelled from right to left, when suddenly the dying man raised himself.

"Allah!" came in a hoarse croak; then his head dropped. He was dead! Ben Hassouar touched his brow, lips, and heart in a humble obeisance.

"He was a prince in my country," he said, reverently. "A sheik of the Atlas. His father was murdered by French soldiers and his wonderful hereditary treasure stolen. He followed the men who did it for years, in order to avenge his father and to discover where the loot was hidden. Now he too has been murdered by the same men. Jackals, he called them. But his servants will follow them wherever they go."

"A fine type," said Dufresne, gently. "Poor devil—why did he not come to *us* at once?"

Ben Hassouar shook his head. "Such men despise the police. It was natural that he should wish to kill with his own hand the man who murdered his father."

"Did he say of what this treasure consisted?"

"Yes, French and Spanish gold; these desert men are all—h'm—well—raiders."

"Quite so," Dufresne rejoined, dryly. "But that is none of our business. You asked who killed the two men whose skin was ripped off?"

"It was the last question I put—and he died without answering it."

"Very well, Inspector. Make a translation of your notes and let me have it. See that the body of the man on the stairs is carefully guarded. He is one of these tattooed bandits. Bertillon will want a photograph of his back at once. I shall communicate with all the ports and frontiers. That fellow Voisin will try to reach Kenifra, now that the old sheik's son is dead also. Come along, we have much to do. You and Louys had better snatch a little sleep," Dufresne said, turning to me. "You look half dead, and no wonder. It's a bad defeat for us. If that Tuareg hadn't attacked Voisin and his men we'd have captured them all. It happened just a couple of hours too soon."

WHO WERE THE TATTOOED MEN?

THE next day my chief summoned me to his office. The anxiously-awaited report from Kenifra had arrived.

"I will not read it all to you," he said, pointing to a chair, "but I know you'll want to hear how this business started. Years ago, ten men, among whom were Voisin, *alias* Biribi, Tomassin, Calagnac, Jules Brique, Tessier, and a former officer of the merchant service, succeeded in stealing guns and ammunition and escaped from the 7th Disciplinary Battalion stationed at Beni Mourah in the desert. Arab Goumiers—camel-riders—were sent after them, led by three Spahis. They tracked them to the coast, and after several weeks came up with them. The men were in possession of a little ruined redoubt, but after some desultory shooting on both sides they surrendered and were taken back to Casablanca, where the court martial sentenced them each to three years' hard labour. The naval man had disappeared and the leader, Voisin, declared that he had been lost in a sandstorm. Soon after the nine men had been sent to the labour gangs, rumours reached the authorities of a night attack months previously by French soldiers on a Tuareg's oasis residence at Beni Ouadin.

"The story was very fantastic, and so interwoven with tales of a stolen treasure that the Commandant refused to investigate. The more so since none of the tribe would confirm the story. We know to-day that the tale was true. Here is the last link. The man killed last night is Tomassin, and on his back are the latitude and longitude. In his pocket was a photograph of three Arabs, and one of them is the Tuareg who was killed. That proves that these men knew they were watched and followed by the old sheik's son. I have telegraphed a long account to the authorities at Kenifra and have asked them to send sharp-shooters to watch the strip of shore fifty kilometres north-west of Kenifra. If we do not succeed in catching Voisin and his three companions, they will certainly try to reach the hidden gold. We shall trap them more easily in the desert than in Paris; there are not so many hiding-places. Now what do you say to a trip to Casablanca, you and Louys? I am very curious indeed to know if this tattooed secret truly refers to hidden

gold. If I could I would come with you myself. The Prefect has consented to let me send you, although it is very irregular. As a matter of courtesy, you must of course ask permission to investigate the matter of the Commander at Casablanca. Fortunately, he is a friend of mine and will not refuse. Arrange to start to-morrow *viâ* Cadiz. Perhaps in the meantime we shall have news of the men. It seems incredible that they should be able to get out of the country; but they are clever scoundrels, and France has so many frontiers. Report to me at six to-morrow; your train leaves at seven-thirty. I will have your tickets and papers ready."

OFF TO AFRICA.

NEITHER Louys nor I could contain our delight once we were out of the great man's office. We insisted on dragging the old Brigadier along to celebrate. He consented to drink our wine, but growled and grumbled in a continuous monologue—furious at being left behind.

"A nice thing to keep me in Paris whilst you youngsters get all the fun. I hope the Tuaregs kidnap you both," he said — but his grip when we parted for the night belied his words. He was the first to greet me at the Quai des Orfèvres the next day, and his eyes twinkled good-humouredly as he exclaimed:—

"A wire from Spain, my friends. Four men boarded a trading vessel at Cadiz for Morocco. The Spanish police received our instructions too late to stop them. The Commandant at Kenifra has sent a squad of Goumiers and légionnaires to the coast, so you'll probably arrive in time to see Biribi and his pals brought in."

M. Bertillon confirmed the news and wished us *bon voyage*, adding a few words of kindly advice; so after a hasty meal we settled down for the long journey to Bordeaux, Cadiz, and thence to Morocco. Both Louys and I were like boys released from school. We forgot that men had been murdered, that Voisin and the others were cruel, deadly *apaches*. The glamour of hidden treasure, desert riders, and Arab nomads had stirred our imagination. What a change it was from the everlasting finger-prints, knives, bloodstains, and all the usual retinue of crime! No wonder our chief had said wistfully that he would have liked to come also.

The Commandant at Kenifra was very kind. Although it was unusual, he agreed to assist us in every way. A dozen légionnaires and six camel-riders, commanded by a Spahi, were already patrolling the sand-hills near the shore, he informed us. They had reported that no rocks or headlands answered to the description of the mysterious lion's head. Nor had any strangers been seen as yet. That day a relieving squad would ride out and would act as escort for us if we wished. To this we eagerly agreed. Progress across the yielding sand was slow, and a glowing twilight already made long crimson shadows, which seemed to stretch out endlessly, of our company, when the sergeant in command, who had consulted the Arab guide several times with visible uneasiness as dusk drew near, abruptly gave the order to halt.

"I cannot understand this, gentlemen," he said, coming towards us. "This is where

The son of the Arab who was killed by Voisin and his gang.

A photograph taken by a French Government official just before the occurrence.

my comrades were on duty. Some camped here, others in an old ruined outpost a mile inland. We should have been challenged by now."

A CAMEL CHARGE.

AT that moment the guide uttered a guttural cry and held up his hand. Faintly vibrating sounds seemed to ripple over the desert, accompanied by a crackling like dry twigs snapping in a fire.

"Forward at the double! Those are shots!" the sergeant yelled. "Camel-riders spread out in a half-circle in advance. There is a fierce fight going on near the shore."

Admirably trained, every man dropped unnecessary equipments, retaining only gun, ammunition, and water-bottle, and before the last word was ended the Goumiers swept away with a swift spidery motion—their tall, long-legged dromedaries looking like running giant ostriches in the gloom. We followed on our horses, whilst on each side padded the foreign légionnaires—silent and grim.

The cries and spattering volleys quickly grew louder. Then abruptly we heard a thin, vibrant bugle call.

"That's the 'Cease fire,'" cried the sergeant. At the same moment a camel-rider dashed up, halted, and slid to the ground from the instantly kneeling beast.

"Tuaregs!" he called, shrilly. "They caught the Frenchmen on the beach. Six of them — who had landed from a boat. The first warning we had were screams and shots. Corporal Villiers and his men had to retreat to the redoubt. The Tuaregs swept past firing; two hundred of them, I should think. We were hopelessly outnumbered for a fight in the open. Our men are on the beach now."

Twenty minutes later we came up with a group of men carrying torches. Sprawling in a heap like limp puppets were the last of the tattooed men, and above them on the sand dunes lay several blue-clad Tuaregs An ambulance man was examining the prone figures.

"One of them is alive, sergeant," he called. "He wishes to speak to you."

The dying man opened his eyes as we knelt beside him and smiled faintly at my colleague.

"I know you," he said in a tired voice. "From Paris, eh? But you've come too late. Biribi is dead; only Tessier got away. The Arabs must have watched us land. They waited till we had the money and were

"Tuaregs!" he called, shrilly. "They

going to carry it to the boat. Then they just killed us one by one—all except Tessier—and rode away with the gold."

"Where is the lion's head?" Louys asked. Again the man smiled, mockingly it seemed to us; whilst the flickering light from the torches twisted his haggard face into grotesque shapes.

"There *is* no lion's head. The tattooing was mostly wrong. Serves us right. We all intended treachery. Dulac the sailor did the tattooing on our backs when he saw the Goumiers hunting for us. We knew escape was impossible and that we should be searched, so we buried the gold on the beach. 'All or none,' we swore, and Biribi

made Dulac prick part of the directions to the hiding-place on each man's back with gunpowder. None was to be able to find the place without the others. But Dulac knew where it was; he had a compass. So we killed Dulac and buried him in the fort. Serve him right! He meant to cheat us, and added that bit about the lion's head and the rock in the sea. Biribi discovered the trick when he found some of us again and copied the marks on our backs. But there was enough that was right. I expect Dulac thought Biribi might have had time to examine the tattooing, or perhaps he was afraid of forgetting the exact spot himself. An African desert is not Paris. We all intended treachery, anyway. Biribi was free first and tried to get here, but the old sheik's son had followed him to Algiers and Biribi fled to Paris. Some of the message was right, though, for Dulac was himself afraid of forgetting where the spot was. But the Tuaregs gave us no rest. They followed each man when he was released. We didn't know that at first; and then La Chouanne betrayed us. Voisin killed those two men, and cut out the marks, because he wanted the gold for himself. That brought the Arabs down on us at once. What a mess!" And closing his eyes wearily, the man passed away without a quiver.

caught the Frenchmen on the beach."

The Commandant shrugged his shoulders when we related what had happened.

"I shall do nothing," he said. "The Tuaregs were justified in killing those *apaches*. For it's clear that the old story of the murdered sheik and the stolen treasure is true. I was not here at the time, but I've heard about it."

BERTILLON placed the queer photographs of the case before him when I reported, and looked at them a long time, lost in thought.

"Well," he said at last, "it was a curious business. We failed to win out in many respects this time. Take these up to the records and tell Calorbier to classify them as dead."

"But Tessier got away," I ventured.

"Yes—for how long? Those desert men never forget. I'll keep copies of these and the *dossier*. Something similar may happen again."

(*Next month: "The Man Who Bred Cats."*)

"How to Write a Short Story"

By

ALBERT KINROSS

Illustrated by
D. L. GHILCHIK

THE branch line from Tivetshall to Market Yeldham is a leisurely affair upon which trains dawdle and pull up and start off again. Sometimes they stop at a station with a porter and booking-office all complete, and sometimes it is merely a "halt" with a platform and a corrugated iron shelter against the rain. And everybody is very sociable and friendly and unhurried, like the trains themselves.

At Monk's Lane Halt one July morning there waited an elderly, upright woman with a high complexion and a young man with an enormous shock of bright red hair. He had, apparently, left his hat at home, and he carried an empty basket. When the train came in the young man found a carriage, opened the door, and jumped inside, and next he put his head out of the window.

"I won't forget; it's two pounds of salmon, and if he's got some really fresh shrimps—how am I to know if they're really fresh?" he called down to his companion.

"You stick your nose in them and smell," she answered, laughing; "and if you can find a couple of good head of lettuce——"

"Anything else?" he shouted.

"Yes, there's that mayonnaise sauce they put up in bottles."

"You're a greedy old thing!" cried the young man from the window.

"Now you behave yourself, and don't forget."

For answer the young man suddenly chucked his companion under the chin and kissed the tip of her nose, which was as far as he could reach without falling out of the window.

The elderly lady laughed again.

"And if you're passing Cartwright's," she added, "you might look in and see if they've any new gramophone records—a new Caruso, or Kreisler, or Clara Butt."

"Aren't I as good as Clara?" asked the young man in an offended tone; and then the train started. He blew a kiss from the window and sat down.

He found himself now in the company of a dear old lady with a bonnet and cameo brooch, and facing them was a schoolboy in a cap and a schoolgirl, slightly older, brother and sister by all appearances; while in the corner sat a gentleman—one could see the legs of a gentleman—the rest of him was hidden behind one of those large newspapers that begin with Births, Marriages, and Deaths, and end with pictures of houses and estates that are to be let or sold.

The dear old lady was smiling broadly and with much approval, and, catching the new-comer's eye, "I do like to see a young man who is nice to his mother," she began.

"Mother!" cried the red-headed young man; "that's my wife."

The schoolboy looked up as though he wanted to say something.

"My wife!" repeated the red-haired young man.

"Your *wife?*" asked the schoolboy, whose sister—it must have been his sister—now gave him a kick; but it had slipped out for this boy was one of the asking sort, and it certainly seemed curious.

"Yes, my wife," repeated the red-headed young man, in the friendliest possible manner.

The boy, thus encouraged, probed again.

"But—but why——" he began.

"But why what?"

"Why did you marry her?" asked this puzzled and ingenuous boy.

His sister wanted to know, too, and so did the old lady, if appearances are anything to go by. Only the gentleman in the corner, wrapped up in his newspaper, gave no single sign of interest.

"It's a long story," said the red-headed young man. "I had to—I'm a detective."

"A detective!" cried both children in chorus.

"Yes, a detective."

"My!" cried the old lady. "I didn't know we had any of them about here."

"You wouldn't have me, if it hadn't been for Vibart," muttered the red-headed young man, gloomily.

"Who is Vibart?" asked the schoolgirl; she was nearly a flapper, but not quite.

"The best pal I've got in the world, my chum, my *alter ego*, if you know what that is."

"Your other self," said the schoolboy, proudly. He knew that much. "What about him?"

"Vibart came down here and took lodgings with Miss Norton—that's my wife. Before I married her she kept chickens and took boarders."

"Same as I used to do," said the old lady, "only I kept ducks as well."

The gentleman in the corner said nothing.

"Vibart is what some people call an artist, but I've heard him called 'a stinkin' ile painter'—comes to the same thing. He paints glorious landscapes in oils, out of doors, and when he's driven off the boys that crowd round him and interfere, I've heard him called that. Oil paint does smell," said the red-headed young man, thoughtfully. "He came down here and took lodgings with Miss Norton, the lady who is now my wife."

The young man suddenly chucked his companion under the chin and kissed the tip of her nose.

"Did he pay his rent?" asked the old lady; "some of 'em don't. But I can't say as I ever had any oil painters. Mine was people who came in the summer and had a holiday and proper food. They don't

get proper food in London. I packed 'em in anywhere."

The two children had waited impatiently for her to finish.

"Your name's George," said the red-headed young man, addressing the schoolboy.

"How did you know?"

"I know everything."

It was a lucky shot, and the red-headed young man continued.

"Vibart came down to Miss Norton's last summer and took lodgings," he ran on. "He painted all day long, but in July he felt he must go to London. The July sales were on, and he always goes to them and buys a new rig-out. Always has done, always will do. He went up for a few days and stayed at his studio. And on the Monday morning he went to the Stores and bought six pairs of socks, three sets of underclothing, shirts, collars, and a tie or two. He also bought four suits of mauve silk pyjamas. They were a bargain. He couldn't resist them, he said. He paid his money and told the Stores people to send everything to him at Miss Norton's. When he got back, the socks were there, the three sets of underclothing, the shirts, collars, and neckties. But no pyjamas! Mauve silk, and such beauties! Dreams! Do you follow all that?"

The dear old lady nodded.

"Pyjamas—them's the things that gentlemen put on at night?" she asked.

"And ladies too, nowadays," answered the red-headed young man, darkly.

"I wear them," said George, "and so does Connie. Did he ever find out where they'd got to?"

"He wrote to the Stores, and Miss Norton had signed for them, for all five parcels; but one parcel was missing and Miss Norton said she knew nothing about it and had been too busy to look what she was signing. She'd just taken the parcels in, and there they were. Nobody knew anything. There's only Grace, the maid, and Martin, the man who helps with the chickens, and, of course, they wouldn't pinch anything. The Stores people said they had been left and Miss Norton had signed for them. Vibart told me all this the next time I met him. It was my first case. I had just set up in business as a detective. 'Detect that!' said Vibart."

"How much were they worth?" asked George, thoughtfully.

"It wasn't a question of money. They were lovely silk pyjamas, an extravagance; Vibart had never had any silk ones before I cut out the maid. My suspicions fell on Miss Norton. I know what women are. She had opened that parcel and fallen, and I dare say her own nightgowns were wearing out."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said the old lady. "it's the washing wears them out, especially if you send 'em to a laundry."

"Miss Norton hadn't sent any mauve silk pyjamas to the laundry. I took lodgings there to find out. I opened her laundry book on the sly. No pyjamas! Vibart had gone, and, 'You leave it to me,' I had said to him, and he had agreed. I lodged with that woman for twelve weeks and discovered nothing."

"Couldn't you look through her things when she was out?" asked George.

"I should have done," said Connie.

"I did look, and discovered—nothing. I looked everywhere."

"You couldn't see into her bedroom?" asked the old lady; "though it isn't right."

"She always pulled the blind. There was but one thing to do!"

"And what was that?" asked both children in one breath.

"Marry her!" cried the red-headed young man. "Then I'd find out. I told Vibart, and he said, 'Don't be an ass, Reginald; it isn't as important as all that.' But this was my first case, remember; and I was determined not to fail. I proposed to her, and I'll do her the justice to say that she wouldn't have me the first time, nor yet the second or third. Perhaps she'd grown suspicious. 'You're slightly dotty,' she said; but I persisted."

"Go on," here interrupted the old lady. "Had she got 'em? I have to get out at the next station and I want to know. Please go on," she insisted.

"And so have we," said George and Connie; "we've got to get out too."

"And then I had a brain-wave," pursued the red-headed young man, brightening. "I kicked up a row in the middle of the night and she came out of her bedroom with a candle, and I yelled, 'Fire! Murder! Thieves!' and came out too."

"That ought to have finished her," said the old lady.

"It finished me. She came out of her room in a dressing-gown down to her heels and her hair in papers, and not a spot of mauve could I see on her—she was so wrapped up. 'I've been yelling in my sleep,' I said; 'I often do it.' And then I apologized till she went back to bed."

THE train drew into Smethwick Station.

"But she did marry you in the end?" cried the old lady, desperately.

"Yes, last February, on St. Valentine's Day. I kept on asking her, and at last she relented."

The train had come to a standstill and two

"I kept on asking her, and at last she relented."

people were waiting to get in and the detective's three listeners were waiting to get out.

"And had she got the pyjamas?" asked George and Connie.

"Drat those pyjamas!" said the old lady; "I'm going to get out."

She gathered her parcels together and descended. So did the two children. The other passengers stepped in and took their places.

The red-haired young man stuck his head out of the window and the train began to move.

"I married her," he cried; "and the woman wears nightshirts! It nearly broke my heart. And the silk pyjamas turned up after all. They'd got put away or lost somewhere." Then he sat down again.

The silent man in the corner was waiting for him. He laid his newspaper aside.

"Now, what on earth," he began, "do you mean by libelling your Aunt Caroline and telling these good people a pack of lies?"

"Carrie won't mind; she likes it," said the red-headed young man; "and don't you see the point?"

"I don't."

"Well, I'm a story-writer, aren't I? My job is to write stories?"

The other nodded.

"I always try 'em on somebody first before I do them, and if the people are interested—*they were interested*—then I go ahead and write 'em down; and if they're bored, I chuck it up. I always try 'em on somebody first, like those people. They're the public, aren't they? And you listened, didn't you?"

"Couldn't help myself."

"Exactly," said the red-headed young man; "so it's all right. It was two pounds of salmon, wasn't it, and shrimps, and mayonnaise sauce, and lettuce?"

"I don't know," said the other, sulkily.

"And gramophone records at Cartwright's?"

The red-headed young man picked up his basket.

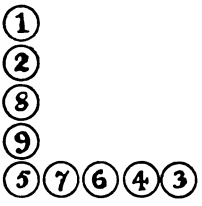
"That's how it's done, Vibart," he said, as he descended; "that's how it's done."

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY

900.—THE LETTER L.

TAKE nine counters, number them 1 to 9, and place them as shown in the illustration, with five counters in the upright and five in the horizontal. It will be seen that the numbers add up to 25 both ways. Now, in how many different ways may the counters be so arranged that the numbers shall add up alike in both directions? It we exchange the 1 and 9 with the 6 and 4 we get a different solution, and merely to change the 1 with the 2 is counted as different. The 6 may be turned round to form a second 9, or the 9 to form a second 6, but you may not turn both 6 and 9 at the same time.



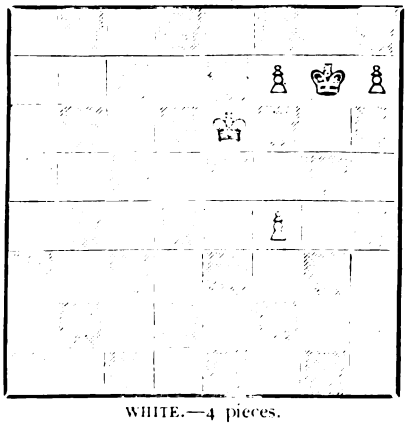
901.—ANOTHER AGE PUZZLE.

A CORRESPONDENT proposes the following question. The reader may at first think that there is insufficient data for an answer, but he will be wrong. A man's age at death was one-twenty-ninth of the year of his birth How old was he in the year 1900?

902.—ECONOMIC CHESS PROBLEMS.

A CHESS problem with the smallest possible material—a single pawn—was constructed many years ago by E. T. Cook. It is, of course, very easy, yet has a real point. It was this. Place the White King on QB 2, a White P on K Kt 7, and the Black King on his Q R 8. Then White plays and mates in two moves. I supplement this with a problem by the late Sam Loyd, with only three White Pawns. White plays and mates in three moves. It will be found ingenious and interesting

BLACK—1 piece.



WHITE.—4 pieces.

White to play and mate in three.

903.—A GARDEN PUZZLE.

THE four sides of a garden are known to be 20, 16, 12, and 10 rods, and it has the greatest possible area for those sides. What is the area?

904.—WORDS WITH ONE TAIL.

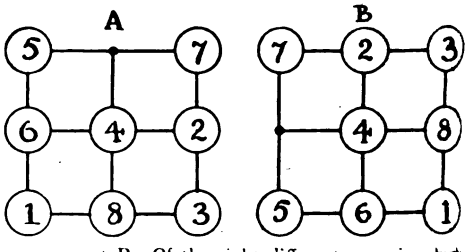
CAN you find ten verbs answering to the following definitions and all of two syllables and with the same end?

My *first* is to enlarge we rightly say.
My *second* is to threaten 'tis quite clear
My *third* is to hang down in any way.
My *fourth* is to be—well, just insincere.
My *fifth* is to watch closely, I suppose.
My *sixth* is to move lower, to drop down.
My *seventh* is to be willing, to propose
My *eighth* to stand against, I frankly own.
My *ninth* to cause annoyance anyhow.
My *tenth* is to increase, to spread, to grow.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

895.—EIGHT MOTOR-CARS.

MOVE the cars in the following order: 5, 3, 2, 5, 7, 6, 4, 1, 5, 7, 6, 4, 1, 6, 4, 8, 3, 2, 7, and you will have the arrangement A: or move thus: 4, 1, 2, 4, 1, 6, 7, 1, 5, 8, 1, 5, 6, 7, 5, 6, 4, 2, 7, and you will get the arrangement B. Of the eight different ways in which the cars may be *arranged* in a magic square only four are obtainable under the conditions, and only two of these in as few as nineteen moves.



896.—ANOTHER STREET PUZZLE.

IF there is the same number of houses on both sides of the street the one with its number unchanged will be of the form $4n-1$, the number of houses on each side will be $3n-1$ and the total number of houses $6n-2$. But the number given—181—is of the form $4n+1$ Therefore there must be one more house on one side of the street than on the other. In fact, the number of houses on the side that originally had the house No. 1 must be $3n$, and on the other side $3n+1$, the total number of houses being $6n+1$. The answer is that there were 271 houses altogether in the street if No. 181 is unchanged.

897.—MISSING WORDS.

THE words in their order are: SEDATE, TEASED, SEATED

898.—EASY DRAUGHTS.

PLAY as follows: 24 19, 28–32, 19 15, 32–28, 15 10, 28–32, 10 14, 32–28, 23 27, 28–32, 22 18, 32–23, 18 27, 30–26, 14 9, and White wins.

899.—THE YEAR 1927.

$2^{11}-11^2=1927$.

NIGHT
TCHMAN Story By W.W. JACOBS

MAY 5 1928

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

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She gets through a whirlwind day—yet she always looks fresh and cheerful

Home from a strenuous day ready to enjoy the evening's fun; she is not tired out and ill-tempered, with nerves on edge, like so many others, nowadays.

She understands the vital importance of keeping up her energy. That is why she drinks a glass of Horlick's at 11 o'clock. It keeps up her physical **and nervous** strength throughout the day.

She knows, too, that if she comes home late at night tired out, her nerves will be too exhausted to let her sleep. And sleep she must have—plenty of it, too—**if she is to keep her good looks and her happiness,** so she drinks another glass last thing: it induces sleep and gives her all the nourishment she needs to replace the energy she spends so liberally.

Fight your tiredness, your weakness, with Horlick's. Get over miserable depression.

Lack of just that properly-balanced nourishment is the most prolific cause of debility, weakness, despondency, illness and failure to do oneself justice at the great moments of life—the cause of so much difficulty in recovering from 'flu and other illness.

It is because **Horlick's makes good this lack** that it proves invaluable to all.

Horlick's is a balanced food, that is to say, it supplies in correct proportion the needs for body heat, muscular and nervous effort, and tissue replacement. **It quickly renews energy in the whole system,** thus enabling you to avoid exhaustion, with its attendant risks of chill.

A glass at any time will do you good, but for building up sound health you should make a point of taking Horlick's every day—at 11 in the morning and again last thing at night.

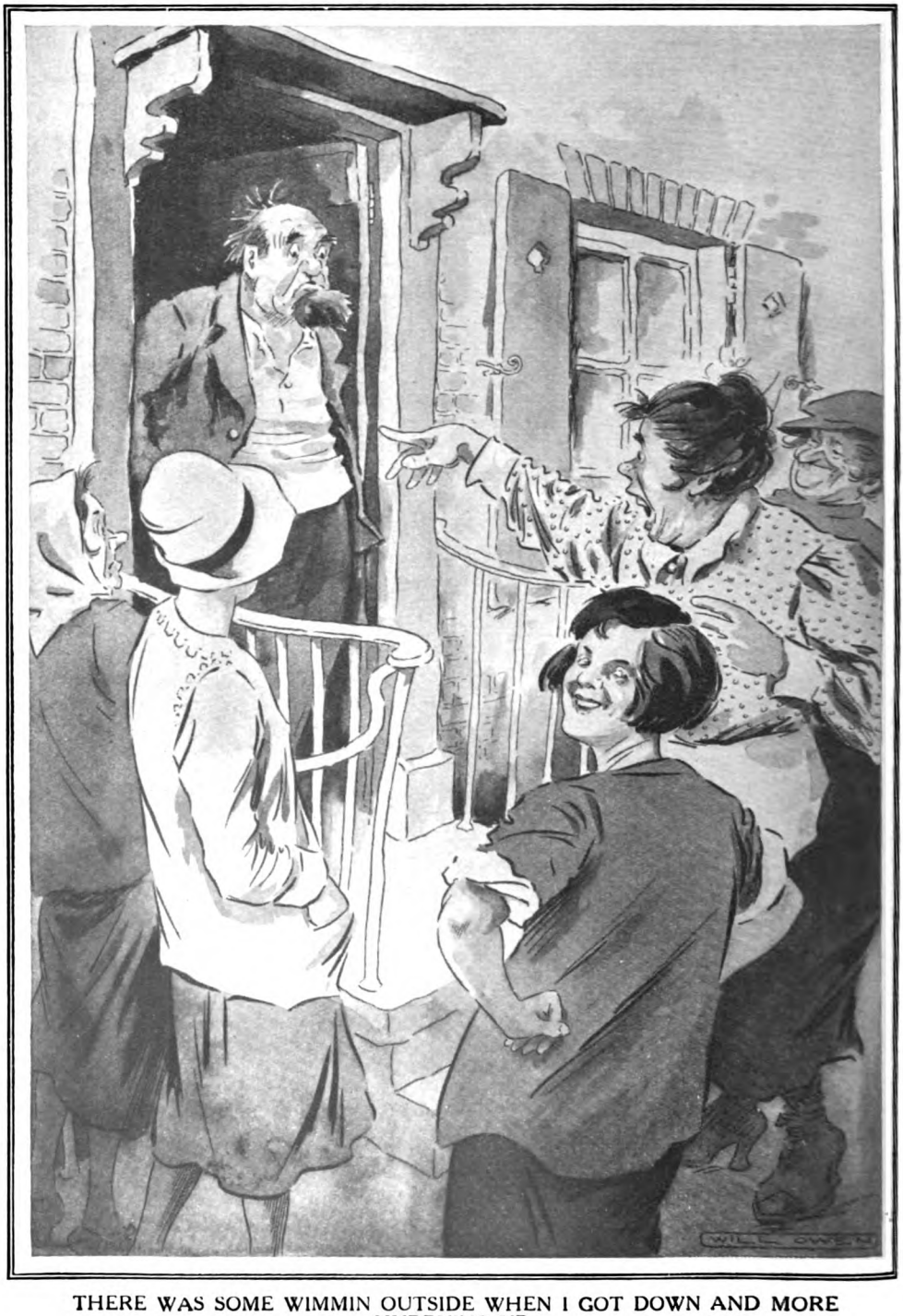
Made from the vital elements of fresh rich milk and malted cereals, Horlick's is complete in itself. There is no need to add more milk.

HORLICK'S

Obtainable everywhere in glass bottles at 2/, 3/6, 8/6, 15/-. Also in tablet form in glass pocket flasks. Use the NEW HORLICK'S MIXER, 1/6. Call for a glass of Horlick's ***hot or cold,*** *at the nearest café, restaurant or soda fountain.*

HORLICK'S MALTED MILK CO., LTD., SLOUGH, BUCKS

MAY, 1928.



THERE WAS SOME WIMMIN OUTSIDE WHEN I GOT DOWN AND MORE HURRYING UP.

(*See page 422.*)

THE NIGHT-WATCHMAN AT HIS BEST

LOVE-LETTERS

W. W. JACOBS

Illustrated by
WILL OWEN

THE summer evening was giving way to night and the craft on the river were already putting out their lights. The master of the barge which was sitting on the mud at the end of the jetty stood, a forlorn figure in the gloom, listening to an oration proceeding from the cabin. It was in a female voice pitched in a high key, and of such a personal nature that the night-watchman, gazing on the deck from above, sent down a little message of brotherly sympathy.

"She can't keep on all night," he said.

The man below spat over the side, hitched up his trousers, glanced at the sky, and finally looked up at the night-watchman.

"*Can't* she!" he said, dispassionately.

"P'raps she'll break a blood-vessel," said the night-watchman, thoughtfully.

He spoke in a low voice, but not low enough. The voice from the cabin joined in the conversation and monopolized it. Beginning by speculations as to the night-watchman's origin, it passed swiftly to a description of his age, his figure, his morals, his treatment of his wife, and his future destination. In a passage of real eloquence it paid admiring tribute to the way in which he had eluded the police for so many years, but foretold a speedy downfall. Charges of bigamy completed the discomfiture of the leading misogamist in Wapping, and gasping for breath he turned and stumped up the jetty.

"Wimmin," he said, as he lowered himself carefully to his favourite box, "wimmin are all alike. When they are young and good-looking and trying to catch a husband, nothing could be nicer. As soon as they 'ave caught 'im they begin to put on airs and their true nature comes out. Nothing he does is right. Nothing. If 'e does 'em a kindness they get suspicious at once and try and find out wot he 'as been up to. If 'e takes no notice of 'em they tell 'im they wish they was dead, but he needn't think they're going to die just to please 'im and the cat with yeller 'air acrost the road, 'cos they're not."

He rose impatiently and took a turn or two farther up the jetty.

AND no woman minds whether wot she ses is true or not (he said, resuming his seat). Catch a man out in a lie and he looks a bit ashamed of himself; catch a woman out in a lie and she smacks your face for you.

I felt sorry for that chap below, 'cos I know wot it is. I've known my missis talk, off and on, for three weeks about something I 'adn't done; 'ow long she'd 'ave talked about some of the things I '*ave* done—if she only got to know of 'em—I can't imagine. I've often wondered, but I'd sooner wonder than know.

I 'ad a nasty turn two or three years ago. I was as innocent as a new-born babe, but that didn't make a bit o' difference. A woman don't mind if a man is innocent or not so long as 'e can't prove it. If a man could get 'arf-a-dozen angels, 'arps and all, swearin' as he was telling the truth, she wouldn't believe 'em. She'd on'y say he 'ad been standing 'em 'arf-pints.

It all come about through a chap called Slinker, a man as disgraces my street by living in it. I don't suppose anybody knows 'is real name, Slinker being such a proper one for 'im that you couldn't call

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'im anything else. Little shrimp of a man he is, with a face like a rat and a nasty way of getting even with people 'e don't like. And the people 'e don't like are them as won't pay for beer for 'im.

We both 'ave the same 'ouse of call, the Carpenters' Arms; a nice quiet little pub close to where I live. Arternoon is my on'y time there, o' course, and I generally 'ave 'arf a pint to 'elp me on my way to the wharf.

I don't like Slinker, and one day in the Carpenters' Arms I told 'im so. There was three or four there, and one o' them gave me the tip to look round, just in time to see Slinker drinking up my beer. He said it was a mistake, and arter I 'ad taken it from 'im and drunk it up—to prevent any more mistakes—I told 'im just wot I thought of 'im. And I told 'im wot other people thought about 'im and 'is nasty artful ways.

"You ain't a man," I ses; "you're a shadder, a shadder wot is always follering behind people to find anything they lose; you ain't got the pluck to steal. You're a nasty crawling shadder wot gives a honest man the creeps to look at you."

"'Ear, 'ear," ses a brewer's drayman, wot was big enough to say anything he liked to anybody.

"You've got a nasty mind, Bill," ses Slinker, shaking his 'ead. "If I 'ad a mind like yours I should join the Salvation Army and see wot they could do for me. You'd look a fair treat playing the tambourine; your stummick's just made for it."

"And dancing backwards," ses that fool of a drayman, spluttering 'is beer all over the floor.

I watched 'em for a moment, grinning all over their pore silly faces, and then I sat down and told 'em a few things about Slinker wot 'e didn't know I knew about. Some of 'em was reely about another man, but Slinker would 'ave done 'em if he 'ad thought of 'em. Afore I 'ad finished he was shaking all over with temper, and the big drayman was asking 'im why he didn't poison 'imself. He gave me one look afore 'e went out, and then 'e come back and put his 'ead in at the door and gave me another.

"Get off," I ses, "get off 'ome, and mind you don't eat the cat's supper this time."

I 'ad a pint or two with the drayman—a very nice feller when you come to know 'im—and by the time I 'ad left I 'ad forgot all about Slinker. If he 'ad only forgot about me too it would ha' been better for me.

I DIDN'T think anything of 'im for two or three days, and then one arternoon as I was standing at the front door with my missis, having a little talk about dirty boots and slopping tea on the kitchen table, I saw 'im on the other side of the road. He came across smiling all over 'is face, and at fust I thought 'e was going to try and shake 'ands with me.

"Arternoon, Bill," he ses. "This is a bit o' luck; I thought I might catch you afore you went to the pub, and 'ere you are."

I just looked at 'im.

"I've got a letter for you," he ses smiling again.

"Letter!" says my missis. "Letter!"

"Yes," ses Slinker, nodding. "A lady friend o' Bill's gave it to me to give 'im, with 'er love."

"Ho!" ses my missis. "In-deed!"

She held out her 'and for the letter, and Slinker gave a little cough and looked at me as if 'e was asking me wot he was to do.

"I was told to put it into Bill's 'ands," he ses at last.

"You'll put it into mine instead," ses my missis, trembling all over with passion.

I didn't know wot to do. I knew that wotever I done would be wrong.

"Give it to my missis," I ses; "I 'ave no secrets from 'er."

My missis looked at me; then she made such a funny noise I thought she was going to 'ave a fit. I was just going to give Slinker the tip to 'old on for a minute in case she did, when she laughed. At least it was a kind of a laugh.

"Come on," she ses, "I want that letter."

Slinker put his 'and in his pocket, then 'e took it out and put it in another. He tried pocket arter pocket while we stood watching 'im. Then 'e tried 'em all over agin.

"Funny," he ses. "Wot could I 'ave done with it?"

He went through 'is pockets once more and then 'e turned to me and winked—right in front of my missis.

"I must 'ave lost it," he ses, grinning like a monkey.

"I don't want none o' your lies," ses my missis. "I saw you wink at 'im. You give me that letter."

"It's gorn," ses Slinker, looking round on the pavement. "It was a long letter, too; on pink note-paper with a lovely smell. You could smell it a mile off. Well, so long."

My missis made a grab at 'is jacket, but he dodged to one side and then twisted out of the way agin as she rushed at 'im.

"See you later, Bill," he ses, and then 'e turned and run up the road with my missis full pelt arter 'im.

She gave up in about twenty yards and then come back very slow and careful with 'er eyes fixed on me and walked straight into the kitchen and sat down without saying a word. Anybody might ha' thought she'd been struck dumb for life—but I knew better. Things like that only happen in books.

I was about 'arf way to the wharf when I see Slinker's little game. Nobody 'ad given 'im a letter and 'e was just trying to get me into trouble. That was Slinker all over; but I knew my missis wouldn't believe it.

AS I expected, when I got 'ome next morning there was no breakfuss, and I 'ad to go and waste money in a coffee-shop. When I got back I found the bed wasn't made for me, and not only that, the bed-clothes was being washed. Even the mattress was 'aving an airing in the backyard, and when I asked where I was to sleep my missis sniffed three times and went on with 'er washing.

I 'ad to sleep on a chair, and I 'ad just got to sleep when she came in with a bucket o' water and went down on 'er 'ands and knees and began to scrub the floor. I 'ad taken off my boots so as I could sleep more easy, and the fust thing I knew of it my feet was in a puddle of very cold water.

One o' them gave me the tip to look round, just in time to see Slinker drinking up my beer.

She cleaned that 'ouse for three days. There was a smell of soap all over the place; and when one part of the floor was drying another part was getting wet; especially chairs that I wanted to set in and such like. And then, without putting anything back in its place, she went off to stay with 'er married niece at Clerkenwell.

She was away for a week, and any good the change might ha' done me was upset by 'aving to get my own food ready and make my own bed. The fust bit o' steak I cooked I gave to the cat, and the second—which was all right—she took 'erself while I was dishing up the taters. Everything seemed to go wrong. If I remembered the bread and bloaters I forgot the butter, and even when I forgot the bread and remembered the butter I didn't remember that I 'ad put it on a chair. Looking arter a house isn't a man's work. It's a easy job, mind you, but it's a job for little minds. A man can make a bed; the thing is, can he sleep in it when he 'as made it?

Then, o' course, I 'ad trouble from people as couldn't mind their own business. I came 'ome one morning, dead beat arter a night's watching, and, arter cooking myself a rasher or two of bacon, went upstairs to bed, and I 'ad just got to sleep when somebody started knocking at the street-door. I laid awake listening for a time, and then,

finding they was knocking louder and louder, I got on some of my clothes and went down.

It was a party from next door but two. A dirty little woman with red 'air screwed up in bits of old newspaper, and a nose that wouldn't know a pocket-'ankerchif if it saw one.

"I just come to see 'ow your pore wife is," she ses. "Is she very bad?"

"Bad?" I ses. "She ain't bad; she 'as gorn away for a day or two to see 'er niece."

"When'll she be back?" she ses, sticking her 'ead into the passage like a tortoise.

"I dunno," I ses, "and wot's more, I don't care."

"Don't know?" she ses. "Why not?"

I slammed the door 'ard and went off up to bed agin, and I 'ad scarcely taken my things off and snuggled down than there was another knock. I could 'ardly believe my ears at fust, but arter a couple o' minutes there was no doubt about it. It was the woman from opposite this time, and she came up as bold as brass and said she wanted to see my wife.

"She drownded 'erself last night," I ses, slamming the door.

I went back to bed, but something seemed to tell me not to take my trousers off, 'cos I should be sure to want them agin. And I 'ad just got to sleep once more when I did.

There was some wimmin outside when I got down and more hurrying up. I just 'ad time to see that when I was swept up the passage like a dead leaf and jammed up 'gin the kitchen-door.

"You clear out," I ses, "or else I'll put you out."

They all screamed at me at once then, and the things they said you might 'ave thought they was talking to their own 'usbands. The noise was awful. Some of 'em stood there calling me names and some of 'em went upstairs to look for my missis.

I believe they looked everywhere, and they was so angry at not finding anything that they went 'arf crazy with disappointment. Some of 'em told me wot I ought to be done to, and some of 'em said they would do it. And they talked of my missis as if she'd bin a angel without wings.

It took four policemen to get 'em outside, all screaming and pushing and taking away my character. Besides saying I 'ad murdered my wife, they said I 'ad done bigamy and picked pockets, set houses on fire, and owed for the milk. And while a woman was 'olding me by the coat-collar and kicking me on the legs one of them silly policemen gave me a little pat on the shoulder and told me not to take no notice of 'em.

By the time they got 'em out the street was 'arf full of people, all trying to mind my business instead of their own. It took the police 'arf an hour to clear the road and when I went back to bed agin the people opposite was still standing at their doors looking up at my winders.

'OW I got through the next day or two I don't know. Twice I 'ad to run for my life; and three times men egged on by their wives, offered to fight me and wouldn't take "no" for an answer. And I was just thinking of going back to sea agin when my missis come back.

I found 'er there when I got 'ome one morning. She was sitting in the kitchen having 'er breakfuss, and when I went in she just sat straight up and looked at me as if I was something wot 'ad been kept too long. Some men would 'ave pointed out to her that she was eating the bacon and egg wot they 'ad got in for theirselves the day before, but I didn't, I know 'er too well.

For two days she didn't say a word, on'y sniffed; but when she did start I thought she'd never stop. It turned out that 'er niece's 'usband—a feller I always liked—'ad pushed 'er out of the 'ouse and chucked 'er box arter 'er. Then the red-'aired woman and the woman opposite 'ad been asked 'er where she'd been and wouldn't believe 'er when she told 'em; and they both said I was too good for 'er, and they wondered at me for taking 'er back. That's wimmin all over.

I slept through most of it—it takes a lot to keep me awake—but she was talking when I went to bed and she was still at it at three o'clock in the arternoon when I got up. And when I started off to work she walked a little way up the street with me to tell me some more things about myself that I didn't want to know, or the folks that was follerin' us to 'ear.

She was pretty quiet next day—gunbad or something—but the day arter it was worse than ever.

I came 'ome tired out. I had 'ad a very bad night of it. Wot with a lighterman as was drunk and thought I owed 'im five bob, and a couple o' Scotch sailormen that rang the bell and pushed their way on to the wharf to go aboard a craft that wasn't there, and then asked me wot I 'ad done with it, I was wore out. I just crawled into the kitchen and tumbled into a chair and sat wondering whether my missis was going to get my breakfuss ready.

I didn't 'ave to wonder long, and I could see at once that I was in for more trouble. White as chalk she was, and her 'ands trembling. Then she stood bolt upright and tried to stare me down.

"There's another letter for you," she ses, arter she found she couldn't.

"If I get my 'ands on that man Slinker," I ses, "I'll——"

"It wasn't Mr. Slinker," she ses, screwing up 'er mouth and looking down 'er nose. "It come by post, soon arter you 'ad gorn last night."

She looked at the letter, wot I 'adn't noticed afore, sticking up on the mantelpiece, and I got up, very slow and careless, and looked at it too.

"It's from the mate of the *Priscilla*," I ses; "I'd know 'is 'andwriting anywhere."

"And the kisses on the back of the envelope, too, I suppose," she ses.

"He—he's a man as will 'ave 'is joke," I ses, arter she 'ad tried to glare me down agin. "Often and often I've said to 'im, 'Bob,' I ses——"

"I don't want none o' your lies," she ses,

"It's gorn," ses Slinker, looking round on the pavement. "It was a long letter, too; on pink note-paper with a lovely smell."

grabbing the letter afore I could stop 'er.

"Are you sure it's 'is 'andwriting?"

"A'most," I ses.

She tore the letter open and looked at it, and then she let off the most awful screech I've ever heard and fell into a chair kicking her 'eels on to the floor and carrying on like a madman. When I tell you that the cat jumped on to the top shelf and got into a saucepan, you'll 'ave some idea wot she was like.

I couldn't do anything with 'er. As for breakfuss, if you'd brought me the best one in the world and held my 'ead down in the plate I couldn't 'ave looked at it.

"Read it," she ses, choking and 'olding out the letter; "read it."

I took hold of it and looked at it. It was on pink note-paper with pie-crust edges and a smell like scented soap. I smelt it two or three times, 'ardly knowing wot I was doing, and then I read it. Short and sweet it was, and I read it over and over agin, wondering wot I was going to say. It said:—

"*Darling Billy,—*

"*It seems ages since I saw you. Wot about a music-'all on Toosday if you can get someone to look arter the wharf for you? And wot about the hat and jacket you promised me? I'm so shabby I ain't fit to be seen with you.*

"*From your loving Popsy.*"

There was kisses arter the name and kisses on the top and kisses on each side. I 'ad never 'ad so many afore in my life.

"Wot 'ave you got to say for yourself?" ses my wife, beginning to rave agin.

"I don't know nothing about it," I ses, "and wot's more I don't want to."

"Who is Popsy?" she ses. "Who is she?"

"I don't know 'er from Adam," I ses.

"Wot's 'er other name?" she ses.

"I don't know," I ses. "Wot's it got to do with me? If a young woman takes a fancy to me and sends me letters I can't help it, can I?"

"I thought you said you didn't know 'er," she ses.

"I don't," I ses.

"'Ow do you know she's *young*, then?" ses my wife, pointing 'er finger at me. "'Ow dare she write letters to my 'usband and ask 'im to take 'er to music-'alls and give 'er hats and jackets! No wonder I 'aven't got a rag to my back. No wonder nothing I do is right. No wonder when I was 'aving a few words with Mrs. O'Brien the other day she asked me wot dustbin I went to for my hats. I often wondered wot you did with all your money. Now I know."

I couldn't get a word in edgeways. Every time I opened my mouth she shoved that 'at and jacket in it, in a manner o' speaking. Then she went upstairs and brought 'er own down and shoved 'em in my face for me to look at.

"You're going to buy me a hat and a jacket," she ses, throwing the old ones on the floor, "*and* a pair o' boots. If *I* 'ave 'em p'r'aps you won't 'ave the money to buy any for that hussy."

"I 'aven't got money to buy 'em for anybody," I ses.

"I'll get 'em on tick and pay so much a week," she ses. "If you could buy 'em for 'er you can buy 'em for me, and you will too."

I tried to make 'er listen to reason, but it was no good. She kept on throwing Popsy into my face until I didn't know where I was, and at last I gave way. Married men'll understand, if the others don't.

And she didn't lose no time about it, neither. When I got up, at four o'clock, and came downstairs to tell 'er that I 'ad altered my mind, she 'ad got 'em, and was just going out for a walk in 'em, to be looked at. I watched 'er go up the street very slow, and looking like a real lady at the back.

'OW I got through the next few weeks I don't know. If it 'adn't ha' been for a few real pals standing me a 'arf-pint now and then I don't know wot I should ha' done. Casting 'is beer on the waters, one of 'em called it. I didn't know wot 'e meant, and when I told 'im so 'e called me a lot o' nasty names and offered to fight me. I didn't 'ave two ha'pennies to rub together, and when I passed the landlord of the Bull's Head I was afraid to look at 'im.

I 'ad just paid up all but the last two weeks when I found out something. My missis was out and I was just looking round to see whether I could find a few odd coppers anywhere. I 'appened to look in a box in the bedroom cupboard, among other things and hid away under a pile of odds and ends I found some note-paper and envelopes. *Pink, with pie-crust edges and a strong smell o' scented soap!*

At fust I couldn't believe my eyes, or my nose. Then I see 'ow I'd been done, and, 'ardly able to speak, I went downstairs. My missis 'ad just come in. I marched into the kitchen like a lion and held the paper out to 'er.

"Well?" she ses, very cool.

"You—wrote—that—letter," I ses, fixing 'er with my eye.

"Wot about it?" she ses.

"Wot about it?" I ses. "*Wot about*

"Read it," she ses, choking and 'olding out the letter; "read it."

it? Do you remember the way you carried on and the things you said about me?"

"Wot about Slinker's letter, that 'e didn't give you?" she ses. "If other wimmin can write to my 'usband I suppose I can. Though not so welcome, per-haps."

"And wot about the 'at and jacket and boots?" I ses.

"Surely a woman can ask 'er own 'usband for clothes," she ses.

"And wot about the deceitfulness of it?" I ses. "Pretending to be another woman and taking away my character about it. Wot about putting a wrong name to the letter?"

"It wasn't a wrong name," she ses. "Popsy is my pet name."

"First time I've 'eard of it," I ses. "Who gave it to you? Who calls you by it?"

"You did," she ses.

"*Me!*" I ses. "*Me!* Why, you must be mad. When did I ever call you Popsy?"

"When we was keeping company," she ses, blowing 'er nose.

That's the worst o' wimmin; always remembering something that ought to be forgot just to get their own way. And then snivelling about it. If I did call 'er that name, it was when I was young and foolish; and if young men were not foolish they would go on keeping company instead of getting married.

I went out of the 'ouse in a daze, and I was so upset that when I ran into Slinker just outside the Carpenters' Arms and got 'old of him by the throat, instead of wringing 'is neck I let 'im stand me a couple o' pints.

Dr. Feldman, peering down upon him over the banisters.

Dr. Feldman

By

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

Illustrated by
W. E. WIGHTMAN

YOUNG PELHAM reached the doctor's house on the stroke of half-past eleven, and as he pushed the Night Bell button he felt pleased with his punctuality. He had kept the appointment to the minute. He looked like a traveller just off the train, yet not quite suitably dressed for a warm night in summer. A hint of adventure might have betrayed itself to a discerning eye. In addition to a heavy overcoat, he carried a plaid rug, and a walker's knapsack was slung across one shoulder, while a stout stick and a felt hat completed the outfit. His mind ran over the contents of the knapsack for the twentieth time—candles, thermos of coffee, sandwiches, book, pistol; and the keys were in his pocket. He had forgotten nothing. His bright eyes betrayed a certain tension; he was excited; the occasional shiver that ran down his spine this warm June night, he assured himself, was anticipation merely. Perhaps it was. He remembered telling his friend, Dr. Feldman, that he intended to go in any case. "I shall sit up till dawn," he said. "If you won't come, I shall go alone." He had meant it, too, only that was in the daytime, and now, with the darkness, his mood had shifted. Companionship, he realized would be most desirable. The presence of burly Dr. Feldman, with his black beard, his deep voice, his big shoulders, and his clear brown eyes, would be undeniably welcome.

He gave the bell another push, pressing it hard, for the minutes had slipped by. "I'm on the tick," he repeated, looking at his

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watch again. " He said he would be ready at eleven-thirty sharp, barring an urgent call. Ah ! " he reflected, with sudden uneasiness, " I'd rather forgotten that ! "

A voice close behind him made him start, and turning sharply he saw the door wide open and the parlour-maid upon the step. She had been speaking, he realized, for a moment or two, but at first he hardly took in what she was saying. Then his heart sank. " Gone out ! " he stammered, in obvious dismay. " But the doctor expected me ! We had an appointment ! " He was rather flustered. " It's just eleven-thirty, the time he said."

" There was an important call, sir. Dr. Feldman left this for you." He read the note hurriedly on the mat. " I'm called out," it ran. " Urgent case. I *must* go. It shouldn't take long, and I'll join you in the house the moment I'm free. Leave key under the door. M. F., 11 p.m."

" The doctor told me to say, sir, that he should meet you *there*," he heard the girl's voice through his shock of disappointment ; " and that he would bring his own things with him for the night."

The young man's composure was upset. " Yes, I see," he mumbled, stupidly ; " we had arranged to walk instead of taking a taxi, so as not to attract attention——" He paused, realizing that the girl would not know what he was talking about. " Will you come in, sir, and wait ? " she asked, noticing his hesitation. No, he wouldn't do that. He thanked her. " It's all right," he said, as casually as he could, then turned—it cost him a certain effort—and walked slowly down the deserted street alone.

This " effort " he noticed ; the disinclination to leave companionship and light. The shock of disappointment rather surprised him too : its strength, its almost bitter flavour. Something that had lain unacknowledged in him all the day, that had become more insistent as the dusk drew on, something he had deliberately concealed from himself, was now suddenly so clear that he *had* to face it. Pretence had become childish merely. He did face it. The prospect of sitting up all night alone in an empty house he did not relish. " It's absurd," he admitted, " but I am, I suppose, a bit nervous ! "

He made his way slowly, very slowly, across the dim Bloomsbury square in the direction of the unoccupied mansion, turning from time to time to see if anyone might be following him. He would have given a good deal to see the burly figure swinging down the street, the black beard flying. But pedestrians were few, and men with beards were rarer still. The failure of his friend,

though understandable, had disconcerted him more than he cared to admit. "Barring an urgent call," the doctor had said, and the urgent call had come—an unfortunate, rather an odd, coincidence, the young man felt. As a specialist the doctor's time was fairly regular, night calls an exception. An unwelcome flavour of question, though not yet of doubt, crept in. His old friend, he remembered, had not exactly favoured this expedition. "If you are sincere when you say you want this experience for your new book," he had said, reluctantly, "all right, then I'll come with you. If nothing happens, at least I can study *you!*" The mental specialist was not interested in so-called hauntings, but the reactions of a human mind under the stress of unusual emotion might interest him. He laughed and yielded.

Pelham drew nearer and nearer to the great empty mansion he had visited already in the daytime; its large echoing hall he could easily visualize, the wide creaking staircase, the carpetless corridors, the smaller drawing-room on the first floor where he proposed to keep his vigil. They lay in darkness now—shadows, silence, emptiness, devoid of normal occupants, at least. It was a place that called for companionship of a robust order. The house, with its grim, dreadful story supported by incontrovertible facts, stood waiting for him only a few hundred yards down the deserted street. He could already make out its square, uncompromising shape, its unwashed windows peering sideways at him. He found himself walking slower and slower, dawdling, hesitating, playing for time. An occasional pedestrian passed him, and twice at least he recognized his friend, only to discover his mistake when they were almost abreast. A taxi whizzed by noisily, a policeman laboriously examined innocent doors, but the neighbourhood lay otherwise still and heavy in the thickish, humid June night. Gloomy it was, the houses gaunt and gloomy too, and the particular house that waited for him came nearer till at last he stood opposite to it. Instead of going in—he passed it, with a quick glance at the staring windows. He took a turn round the square. "I'll wait till twelve," he told himself. "When the clocks strike midnight, I'll go in—whether Feldman has come or not."

Having made himself this promise, he held to it. The policeman helped a little, perhaps, for Pelham realized that he was a suspicious figure, mooning about with rug and knapsack in this desultory fashion, and questions were the last thing he wanted. The house soon faced him again, the policeman a good way down the street; no one was in sight, the clocks were striking the hour. Walking boldly up the steps, he inserted the key, entered the black hole that gaped before him, and closed the door quietly behind him.

Quietly, perhaps, yes, but a hundred echoes went flying none the less, as though the place were alive with footsteps, then dying away into the deep silence they had broken. The darkness was at first impenetrable. A window was open somewhere, for the last strokes of twelve came clearly down the stairs. And immediately, before there had been time to move towards a plan of any sort, there happened two disagreeable things, both of which he could explain, but which he disliked because they revealed too sharply his own condition. The second of these two he explained, indeed—with difficulty.

THE first, as he stood in the well of blackness, not moving, breathing rather low, thinking what he would do next, was a sound close beside him; at his feet it seemed: a curious shuffling sound, and accompanied by a light, stroking touch upon his shoulder, with the result that he had jumped a yard and raised his arm to ward off a possible blow before he realized that it was merely the plaid rug which had slipped from his shoulder and fallen with a faint swishing noise upon the stone floor. He stooped and picked it up, cursing his silly nerves, his movement rapid, as though he felt safer in an upright position, and it was a moment later that the second disagreeable thing occurred, the one he explained less easily.

It happened in this way. The instinct of self-preservation was already automatically at work, for while one hand picked up the rug, the other, dropping the knapsack, clutched the flashlight in his coat pocket, and had actually switched it on as he rose into an upright position again. Holding it askew, in that first second, the beam shot along the hall floor, and the staircase was not directly in its full glare. The blaze, however, was enough for him to catch sight out of the corner of his eye, of—Dr. Feldman, black beard and all, standing motionless peering down upon him over the banisters. Close to the top of the first flight he was, and the very same instant, before the beam could show him fully, he had passed silently and rapidly round the angle and on to the landing above. The following beam, now turned full after him, showed no one. Stairs, landing and banisters were undeniably empty.

Pelham did not move, he did not start, much less did he jump; no single muscle, in fact, stirred. The reaction was of another kind: his heart missed a beat. Breath, at the first gasp, was unmanageable, and at the second—well, some vivid instinct made silence preferable to calling out. To shout,

"Hullo, Max! Doctor, is that you?" in the great echoing hall was impossible. Besides—he already had found the line of explanation—the figure was *not* Dr. Feldman at all. Instinctively, even before he began to argue, he *knew* it was not his friend. There could be no answer to his call. Dr. Feldman was not in the building with him. No one—he almost said it audibly—was in the building with him. The figure was imaginary, of course.

His critical mind, nerves or no nerves, began instantly to argue towards firm conviction. The sudden light, rushing shadows distorted by startled nerves, the fact that Feldman's personality lay vividly in his thoughts, that he longed for him eagerly, hoping with a kind of vehemence that he would turn up any minute now—this was quite enough to manufacture the desired figure out of a sudden glare and a flock of leaping shadows. Holding the beam more or less steadily upon the empty stairs and corner of the landing, he explained away the disagreeable thing. "Why, even in the street I mistook two fellows for him till I got close enough to see my mistake!" Beards, he remembered, with a faint smile, were uncommon these days, rare enough to make an impression. The production of a figure with bearded face was easy enough with flying shadows. There had been no sound of footsteps. And, as he argued, the premonitory shiver down his spine, while it did not wholly pass, grew a little less.

The mind, that is to say, provided a passable explanation, although emotion, being unable to argue, remained discontented and uneasy. Emotion, he realized, would be his problem. "It's always primitive, credulous, superstitious," he reminded himself emphatically. "To observe its behaviour and to note the antics of imagination is why I'm here to-night." And wisely then, before emotion might gain any further advantage, he decided upon action. He would search the house from top to bottom before settling down to his long vigil. A trick? A practical joke? His friend's passionate interest in mental experiment? The question of that "urgent call" again flashed past and vanished.

Leaving his paraphernalia on the floor, he took the pistol from the knapsack and began at once his search of the empty building. With firm, echoing steps, he moved slowly up the staircase, flashing his light in all directions as he went.

A LARGE empty building is not inviting in the darkness, nor is a flashlight, with the contrast of inky blackness just beyond its beam, the best way of exploring it. The search undoubtedly required nerve. This house, moreover, was not merely empty; it was empty because no one could live in it. So devoid was it, indeed, of a pleasant living atmosphere that two successive tenants, and that quite recently, had chosen to die in it—by their own hands. And the reason for their choice, according to Pelham's investigations, added nothing to the homeliness of the atmosphere. Two years before them, another tenant, the origin of the present horror apparently, had also done away with himself, after first doing away, in ghastly fashion, with the rest of his family. Crazed by drugs, drink, love, or something equally powerful and devastating — Pelham had been unable exactly to ascertain—he had been found among the grim remnants of his fearful orgy, strangled by his own hands. His imitators, it was held, owed their similar fates to his vile, terrific, posthumous influence. Subsequent occupiers objected strenuously, broke their leases, paid money rather than stay, even went to court. The house, thus, was in the market for a song—and young Pelham was now searching its dismal entrails at midnight with a shoddy little flashlight. His object was to experience at first hand, and for the purposes of a scene in his new novel, what an imaginative man would feel during an all-night vigil. He himself was an imaginative man, and he got his "copy." He got more besides. The details remain the strangest among the numerous remarkable cases in Dr. Feldman's notebooks.

The search was thorough, but unproductive. It established the fact that there was no one in the great dismal building save himself. It was hardly a reassuring process for a nervous temperament, and it called upon all his pluck to go through certain of the rooms—the servants' quarters, for instance, on the top floor, the offices in the basement, and certain large pieces that had two doors. There was always the feeling that someone trailed stealthily behind him, that he was watched, that the piled shadows concealed a figure. Once a door banged, there were creakings everywhere, there were groans and cracks and whispers down the draughty passages. But the place, otherwise, was still as death, holding its musty smell, its gaping emptiness, its air of rather sinister expectancy in common with most other big unoccupied buildings. And, at the end, Pelham stood in the hall again with the satisfied feeling that he had done his job faithfully, and that he could now settle down in the small drawing-room for the vigil proper. He had brought in a couple of deck chairs during the day; he had his book and candles, his coffee. Whether Feldman came or did not come, he could

manage it. If anything happened, he now told himself, he could manage that too. He went upstairs and settled in. He was calmer—yes, even quite calm. He was master of himself.

It was here that Pelham's version (marked in red ink in Dr. Feldman's notebooks) first caught the attention of the specialist. The word "calm" was underlined, a mark of interrogation in the margin. The search of the building should have left the nerves on edge; instead, the reverse had happened—the young man had recovered his normal quiet. He felt "calm," he could "manage anything" that might happen later. "Didn't particularly notice this odd calmness in himself," ran the expert comment. In talking it over afterwards, Pelham used another adjective: "sedative." Uneasiness had gone, he declared, "just as though I'd taken a sedative and it was beginning to work. I observed everything keenly," he tried to explain, "but things that half an hour before would have startled and made me jump — well, they just didn't. I watched them happen, missing nothing, but without any nasty reaction, horror least of all. I was prepared for anything I might see. Like being doped almost." And in the doctor's notebook, on this point, is an interesting and suggestive comment: "This curious preliminary calmness, though P. noticed it suddenly, came on gradually no doubt. He was aware of it only when achieved. His own word 'sedative' indicates slow approach. Morbid excitement had passed completely, but acute observation nowhere impaired. He felt 'prepared' for what might follow. A *preparation!?*"

The deck-chair was occupied by Dr. Feldman, big shoulders, burly frame, black beard and all.

THE young man, now settled comfortably in his deck-chair, a rug over his knees, the two candles on a packing-case behind his head, sat reading his book with one part of his mind, while, with another part, he stared, listened, watched, every muscle and nerve in alert tension, yet wholly at his ease. His original jumpiness had vanished, nervousness was gone, had exhausted itself perhaps. Opposite to him

was the unoccupied chair intended for his friend. Two blindless windows on his right gave upon roofs and a night-sky too hazy for stars to show. On his left, wide open, was the door through which the top of the staircase, with the few feet of banisters the sham Dr. Feldman had peered over, was just visible. The carpetless room had no stick of furniture, the blank walls marked only with lines of dirt where pictures and a large mirror had been hung. A glass chandelier above his chair sparkled faintly in the flickering candle-light. The light, of course, was poor.

Here he sat reading while the hours passed and the night drew towards morning. From time to time he pricked his ears; creakings on the stairs, cracks of wood on the floors above, sounds in the big hall below, those he noticed without a qualm, but attributed quite rightly to their natural causes. No purpose, no intent, no meaning, living or posthumous, could be ascribed to them. Nothing approaching a footstep, much less a voice, broke the deep silence that wrapped the building from roof to kitchen. Yet his composure was remarkable rather, considering his temperament and his recent jumpiness. And the young man felt disappointment growing on him. Even if he saw and heard nothing, he had hoped for unusual reactions of interesting kind. These did not come. After his first bout of rather boyish "nerves," his recording apparatus, imaginative or critical, registered—nothing. His experiment seemed a failure; the scene in his book would gain no verisimilitude from the description of an actual experience. He even began to feel glad that Dr. Feldman after all had not wasted a night's sleep for nothing. Even if he saw a figure now, his attitude would be one merely of critical examination: could he touch it as solid, walk through it, could it answer questions or show intelligence in response to his advances, his calm, collected, cross-examining advances?

DR. FELDMAN! He put his book down. Ah! He had almost forgotten him. The first keen longing, the bitter disappointment, these, too, had left him. He realized that, for a considerable time now, he had not been alertly waiting for his footstep, his voice, his brown eyes. This expectancy had left him too. This indifference, this forgetfulness, Dr. Feldman also stressed in his own notebook—as a proof that Pelham's mind was no longer working normally. "Noticed his own indifference," ran the comment in red ink, "but not particularly surprised at it."

"Dr. Feldman!" And Pelham abruptly realized, for the first time, that he had forgotten to leave the key outside the front door. Completely overlooked it! Even if Dr. Feldman had come, he could not have got in. Perhaps he had already come—and gone. He would probably not have rung, much less would he have knocked. Possibly, indeed, reflected Pelham, the doctor might welcome the excuse and go home to bed. Well, it didn't matter, the young man thought, as he went down cautiously in the dark to remedy his oversight, but leaving his electric torch on the packing-case. There was nothing of interest here for his clever, learned friend. He was relieved, in fact, to have no critical observer of his own disappointment, of this flat, uneventful, and rather foolish night.

Key in hand, he opened the big door and peered out into the deserted street. It was between two and three in the morning; soon the grey light would come in the sky. No one was to be seen. He paused a moment, standing on the step, then came back inside, shutting the door carelessly, and with a good deal of echoing noise, but again forgetting to leave the key outside, an omission only realized long afterwards. He started to cross the hall. A faint light from his open door above filtered down, so that the banisters were just visible. And it was as he crossed the hall that someone brushed by, and passed in front of him up the staircase. Though no actual touch was registered, he was quite positive of this. Whether he actually heard the steps he could not swear, but that someone who had been standing close beside him in this dark hall now moved up the stairs ahead of him, he was convinced beyond any possible doubt. Had there been doubt, indeed, it was at once negatived, for a second later he saw the outline of a man slip along the banisters overhead and move rapidly along the landing. The outline disappeared towards the door where the faint light issued. The person, whoever it was, had gone into his room.

Pelham went after this figure; he climbed the stairs very quickly, almost ran along the short stretch of landing, and, without a sign of hesitation, entered the room himself. "I burst into it, in fact," he described it afterwards. "And there, in the chair opposite to mine," he said, with intense conviction, "sat—yourself. *You*, Max, sat in that chair." The deck-chair was occupied by Dr. Feldman, big shoulders, burly frame, black beard and all. The head was sunk a little forwards, down upon the chest rather; the eyes were closed; the breathing was regular and sounded heavy. "You looked asleep, though naturally I knew this was impossible." And in his written version, Pelham, describing his own reaction to this "bit of nonsense," emphasized his impatient resentment that a "friend like you, Max, should have played this trifling, rather dangerous trick upon me." He felt sore, even angry.

For in that first instant of inspection young Pelham realized that the doctor had somehow secreted himself in the house from the beginning, that the "urgent call" was a thought-out detail, that it was, in fact, an ill-judged practical joke. He remembered his own first fugitive doubt. Dr. Feldman was not going to lose a night's sleep for nothing; he had always meant to make use of the occasion to give his romantic friend a shock, then study his nervous reactions.

And Pelham resented the trick, its perilous foolishness in view of his own nerves and the fact that he had a pistol. So much did he resent it that, taking his own chair again, he sat there staring at his friend, a kind of dull anger in him, giving no single thought as to *how* the doctor had contrived his trivial little plan. He did not speak, he made no attempt to tackle him about it, he did not even prod him out of this idiotic pretence of being asleep. He just sat and stared, this sullen, rather sulky anger in his heart. He felt no relief that his friend had come and now sat before him; he no longer needed him, nor was his presence comforting. Comfort, even companionship, of that sort he did not want any more. Deep annoyance, contempt to the point of bitterness almost, was all he felt.

DR. FELDMAN, it seems, meanwhile kept up this game of his with a steady perfection that, the other felt, would have been admirable in a better cause. He maintained his pose of sleep without a flaw. It was good acting. No sign of expression showed itself in his face. The body was limp with the relaxation of a man in deep slumber. And the longer young Pelham watched him, the more his angry vexation grew. His thought found words such as

"Idiot, imbecile," phrases like "Amazing trick for a man like you, a great mental specialist, to play"—and finally, after perhaps half an hour of this persistent folly on the "specialist's" part of silence and immobility, since it betrayed no sign of explaining itself, Pelham took up his book again and went on reading. He was furious, yet wanted to laugh.

Comic, no doubt, the situation was, but he was in no mood to appreciate its comedy. He obstinately refused to speak, and in his mind now was a sort of boyish determination that he would meet the other at his own game, and beat him at it too! He made no sign, no sound. He merely read. The minutes passed. Perhaps half an hour slipped by, perhaps longer. His obstinacy remained cast-iron. Dr. Feldman, for his part, also kept up the nonsense; he aped slumber to perfection; his breathing was heavy, heavy; the black beard rising and falling with the movement of his chest; the brown eyes always tightly closed—till, at last, the sound of a clock striking the hour came faintly into the room where these two sat. Pelham counted the strokes, and they were three. There was a gleam of dawn. He looked up suddenly from his book, hardly knowing why——

And this time he started. His blood ebbed, then came back with a rush. What was it? What did it mean? At the first sight, in this faint early light, Dr. Feldman looked precisely as before, ordinary, normal: at the second, he looked—amazing. Every atom of attention Pelham could muster concentrated in his eyes. He stared till they smarted. But his spine ran icy cold.

There *was* a difference, yet this difference remained concealed. At the first glimpse it was Max Feldman who faced him; at the second, it was someone else. Thus he phrased it in his written version, and the brevity was significant. Here was something, apparently, he could not describe. He shivered all over. The former queer insensitiveness, the numbness, had begun to pass. The "sedative" effect was leaving him!

Thus, staring with all his energy, with all available concentration, at his familiar friend, he knew himself dreadfully overwrought. Yet that "second glimpse" refused to come back; the "amazing" aspect of this well-known shape kept hidden. He *had* seen it, however. It was, he divined, still there. The blood gushed and ebbed alternately; his feet, his back were cold. He was "all on edge," like a terrified girl. The figure in the chair, so far as he could analyse, had not altered; the burly frame, the broad shoulders, the black beard, the eyes closed in "sleep" remained as before. "The idiot," he tried to say, "still pretends," but his thought refused to frame the words—because they were somewhere, somehow false. "Idiot" and "asleep," at any rate, were merely lies.

His written description of what followed was extremely, curiously brief. His own eyes remained glued, unable to move. He stared and stared. The beard moved up and down with the slow heaving of the great chest, the relaxed body betrayed no tension, the head sank forwards and downwards as before. Then, suddenly, that "second" glimpse, that "other" aspect came stealing horribly back. The face, hitherto devoid of expression, had begun to change. It was slowly altering. Black and white entered into it somehow, a white that was passionless, a black that was diabolical. The mouth, under the dark hair, sagged; the eyebrows took a slanting twist, the jaw beneath the beard thrust out. It became, slowly but decisively, an entirely different and an atrocious face. The mask slipped gradually downwards from it. And young Pelham, now bereft of power to move, stared helplessly at the appalling change. He was staring, he tried to tell himself, at something he could not believe, something that was not possible, something that human experience cannot admit. But yet he witnessed it. And he could not move his eyes.

"It's *not* Feldman, *not* Max Feldman, *not* my friend," his thought struggled to cry out, then realized vaguely that thought was stifled in him, no longer operating. Thought and volition had simultaneously disappeared. And the head then suddenly moved a little to one side. It slowly shifted. The beard, at a new angle, now revealed the neck. There was no collar.

He tried to scream, to shriek, but breath failed him. Horror dropped over him like ice. He trembled from head to foot. The shuddering was audible, his teeth clattered, his feet tapped the wooden floor. But he still stared helplessly, because sight was riveted beyond any power of his that could either move his eyes or close them. He became aware then that this demoniacal face that aped his friend was about to change still further. How he knew this lay beyond him. He did know it. A faint quiver of the cheeks betrayed it, possibly. Something ghastly ran across the skin. He *knew* the eyes were going to open.

There came a further movement of the head. It lolled to one side—frightfully. The collarless neck was creased with dull red lines. The same instant the two eyes opened, giving back his own awful, fascinated stare. They were bright, fixed, maniacal eyes. Moreover, they were not brown, but black. They gazed into his own with murder in

their depths. And the whole figure then gave a convulsive shudder and began to alter visibly like the face. With extreme swiftness, as in a cinema, this alteration supervened. The great frame seemed suddenly to have grown emaciated, the big

fingers that moved through the air towards his throat. He saw the eyes behind them—like shining lamps—close.

The tremendous clamour that broke in here with its sudden clashing gave him, it seems, the power to move his muscles. A

Facing him on the step, an electric torch blazing in his hand, stood Dr. Feldman.

shoulders sank and drooped, only the black beard still flowed down the collarless neck that was marked with its hideous red.

THEN the outline rose. Leaving the chair without visible effort, it stood up, it wavered a moment, half staggering, half lurching; the arms projected abruptly; the hands opened long, muscular

bell rang furiously, there was a violent banging on a door. The building echoed. The awful figure, though it did not seem to pause in its advance, came, singularly, no nearer actually to his face and throat. A measure of volition, startled into activity perhaps by the resounding noise, returned to him. He sprang up, he shrieked as though his heart had burst, he staggered.

but he reached the door. He was down the steps in what seemed literally a couple of enormous leaps, and across the dark hall. The same second he was fumbling at the big front door, where the knocking sounded. He opened it. Facing him on the step, an electric torch blazing in his hand, stood—Dr. Feldman. He came in, closing the door behind him with a bang. "Frightfully sorry, old man, but it took me longer than I thought. You forgot the key——" was all young Pelham heard before darkness fell over him and he fainted in his friend's arms.

A swoon, rather than a faint, it was, lasting perhaps a minute. A sip of brandy from the doctor's flask brought the blood back to normal ways. There followed confused talk, questions, and somewhat incoherent answers, and then—Dr. Feldman insisted firmly on this—the visit to the room upstairs. They went together, side by side, arm in arm in fact, into an entirely empty room. The candles stood guttering on the packing-case, electric torch and pistol beside them, a book on the floor, and a couple of unoccupied deck-chairs opposite.

But young Pelham, shaking from head to foot, white as chalk, found no very intelligent words, and the specialist, thoroughly at home among conditions of this kind, took him home, administered a mild sedative, and read at his leisure some days later the account of Pelham's night. He had insisted on a written version first. Talk followed, a little study of his own as well, but this was for his private notebooks, as were also two facts he took some trouble to ascertain—namely, that the murderer used drugs on his victims as on himself, and also, oddly enough, that his maniac face held black eyes and was adorned with a black beard into the bargain.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 178.

(The Second of the Series.)

MONARCHS who lived in distant days,
Titles of two of Shakespeare's plays.

1. The gun recoils, the players shoot,
Pain caused by it may be acute.
2. A famous mount must lose its head,
Three little words appear instead.
3. More than a dozen should be here,
But less than twenty must appear.
4. Its sound with joy the hungry greet,
For soon there will be food to eat.
5. For water up the hill she went;
Rapid, indeed, was her descent.
6. One word—the worker's daily fate;
Two words—where few will learn to skate.
7. This mighty range, the abode of snow,
The world's most lofty peak will show.
8. Of twelve, the last but one; 'tis found
To be a time when fogs abound.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 178 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on May 11th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 177.

LEFT is brilliant, right is green,
Lovely jewels here are seen.

1. Fruit. To learn it schoolboys hate.
Instance, 1928.
2. Industry of Hollywood.
Headless, be it understood.
3. Does it—thus I sadly ponder—
Really make the heart grow fonder?
4. Mother, stay! Though healthy, feign
To be ill and full of pain.
5. Drowned herself for love and sadness,
But did Hamlet share her madness?
6. Note! Such ways are not amiss.
Be not sharp or flat, but this.
7. Priest in Britain long ago
Sacred held the mistletoe.

BOODLEBAR.

1. D	a t	E
2. I	l	M
3. A	b s c n e	E
4. M	a l i n g e	R
5. O	p h e l i	A
6. N	a t u r a	L
7. D	r u i	D

NOTES.—Light 2. Film. 4. Two words, and one. 5. Shakespeare, Hamlet.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

SYBIL THORNDIKE – By Her Brother

THE ROMANTIC LIFE-STORY OF OUR GREATEST ACTRESS

By
RUSSELL THORNDIKE

3.—SYBIL THORNDIKE'S LOVE-STORY

IN 1908 Sybil managed to join the Play Actors' Society, which had just started, and she was given a part in a farce of Cecil Raleigh's—an American girl with a strong accent and a bit green. She played this one Sunday night with Cecily Hamilton, Farren Soutar, and Fewlass Llewellyn, and next day had a note from Nigel Playfair to say, "Shaw saw your ridiculous play last night—liked you very much—says you might do as understudy for Candida. Come along quick and read the part." So, knowing nothing about Candida or the great Bernard Shaw boom and the mighty work of the Granville Barker movement and the modern highbrows, she armed herself with a book of words and tripped merrily to rehearse with Shaw.

MEETING BERNARD SHAW.

SHE said she was put at her ease at once by Shaw, who has a knack of treating everyone as his equal, which is most endearing and satisfying to one's dwindling conceit. She went through the part, putting everything she knew into it, and at the end of one of her scenes Shaw went off into shouts of laughter. "Splendid, my dear young lady," he said. "You go home and learn housekeeping and have four children, or six, if you'd rather, and then come back and show me Candida." He was so pleasant that she didn't feel the floor had given way, and he said to Nigel Playfair, "She may as well have the understudy. We must hope Ellen O'Malley won't be off at all, but the girl will learn something understudying an artist like Miss O'Malley." So she was engaged as understudy and had to play in a curtain raiser by Mr. Havelock Ellis.

Sybil's spirits rose again at this good fortune and she went off to rehearsals with a firm resolve to conquer. Mr. Shaw was very kind to her and made her sit by him at rehearsals and explained much about acting to her. He told her that she had something in her which was like Janet Achurch, and she must work hard and perhaps she'd do work of the equality of that great actress one day. Sybil was in the seventh heaven once more and in a state of adoration towards Mr. Shaw. She's still in the same state, I believe. The company consisted of Nigel Playfair and his wife, Ellen O'Malley, Dawson Millward, and Leslie Hamer. They were to open their tour in Belfast, and here it was that Sybil first cast her eyes on Lewis Casson.

I will now quote a letter she writes to me from Belfast—me travelling somewhere in the Middle West States:—

"Darling Russ,—I've seen a man I could marry—it's most absurd. Hold on, and I'll begin about him right away. His name is Casson, Lewis Casson, and he's in an old Repertory Company called Miss Horniman's—it lives at the Gaiety, Manchester. Well, I found that the company he's in is attached to this Gaiety Company. Mr. Shaw wouldn't let the Manchester lot do 'Candida' and made Nigel get a company with Ellen O'Malley as lead to do it, so here we are in Belfast—us doing half the week 'Candida'—the Manchester crew doing the rest of the week with 'Widowers' Houses'—another of Shaw's plays which you probably know nothing about, as you aren't a highbrow,

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and I'm getting to be one very fast. The highbrows are led by—or rather they follow—Shaw and Granville Barker; and people like John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett are all highbrows, and people talk of them in an odd and very familiar voice, and you feel when you listen to them that you are very cheap and that if you aren't careful you'll drop your aitches or giggle, but I keep a tight hold on myself. There's a boy called Basil Dean with a very special highbrow face, and one called Clarence Derwent, who is a wit and makes jokes that I'm beginning to see, but they're too clever. They're all interested in politics, but the prince of the lot is this man Casson.

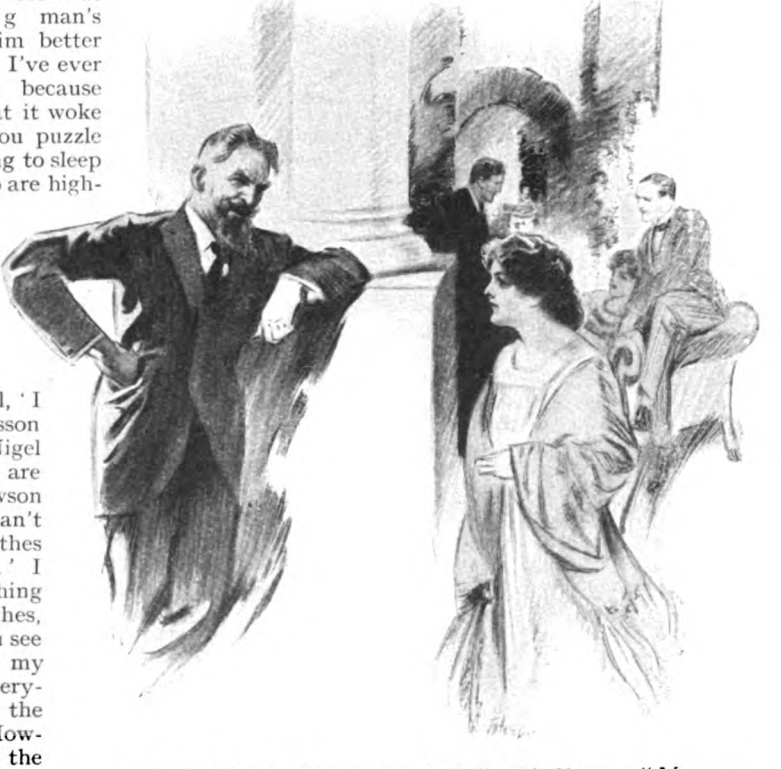
"Well, I saw his photo first outside the theatre this morning, and I thought, 'Now, there's a nice face. I like that man.' He's rather like Basil Bowers [our cousin], only his face is more tidy; it looks strong and determined. I said to May Playfair, 'Who's that man?' and she said, 'That's Casson; he's a very good actor, but he's rather difficult to get on with. I like him all right. He's a Socialist.' That was all, but quite enough to intrigue little sister Syb.

"To-night we went to see 'Widowers' Houses,' and I saw the bloke. He was playing the young man's part, and I liked him better than any young man I've ever seen on the stage because he spoke so fast that it woke you up and made you puzzle a bit, instead of going to sleep as a lot of actors who are highbrow make you. He sort of barks out things. Well, when I'd done gasping a bit, as you do gasp when an Irish terrier barks at you, I said to Nigel, 'I think that man Casson is awfully good.' Nigel said, 'His clothes are appalling,' and Dawson Millward said, 'I can't listen to him—his clothes are so frightful.' I couldn't see anything wrong with his clothes, but then I never can see what's wrong with my own clothes, and everyone says I look like the devil in real life. However, I went behind the scenes after, but we only saw someone called Penelope Wheeler, who is a friend of every large highbrow ever born and is very lovely—like a Rossetti to look at. I walked home with her. She was very nice to me, and now I'm in my room writing. The Basil Dean young man is staying here, too—he was introduced to me by the landlady. I liked him—we talked a bit, but I feel very ignorant. I don't know anything at all about the new movement in the theatre, but I shall find out, I expect, if I go wary and mind my p's and q's. I'll write you more to-morrow. I hope to meet the Lewis Casson, though he'll probably hate me and find me a country Jane.

SYBIL'S FUTURE HUSBAND.

"TWO days later.

"I met him—Casson—this morning. I was out with Nigel and May when we met him. They introduced me, but he only barked a sort of huffy how-d'ye-do to me and didn't speak another word to me. He wore a very shabby overcoat and a hat all down over his eyes like a tramp—he looks as if he would fight you if you gave



"Splendid, my dear young lady," said Shaw. "You go home and learn housekeeping."

him a chance, but quite suddenly something Nigel said made him laugh, and his face looked quite different, and he's got a really lovely voice, very direct and 'I mean every word I say, and don't you forget it.' Well, it's odd, but he's the sort of man I like, but you needn't worry—he'll never be interested even—he hasn't even *looked* at me.

"A week later in Dublin.

"May and I met Casson in the lion house at the Zoo. He was standing in front of a tigress trying to hypnotize it. I'd be terrified if he tried to hypnotize me. I'd go in raving hysterics! He never spoke a word to me, and I don't think he remembered I existed. We went through all the monkey houses, zebras, and giraffes, he and May talking shop all the time. He's raving mad about the theatre, and he looks as if he ought to be an engineer or a sailor or something to do with real life—not a bit like an actor, but fearfully highbrow; at least, he's changing my feeling about highbrows—when it's affected it's highbrow, but when it's real it's enormously interesting, and it's a new way of looking at acting these people have. I mean, they're not in the least exciting like you and me; you can't imagine them making such terrible faces that they'd frighten people like you and I can, but they're being very real and very restrained and nothing actory in their acting. It's rather attractive. I'm starting to try it; you probably won't recognize me when you come home.

"Well, when May and Casson had done all the houses and me trundling behind, May said, 'I'm worn out—you walk too fast,' and Lewis Casson laughed and barked, 'Sorry,' and I said, 'Well, I'm going back to the lion house to have a look at the wolves,' and Casson said, 'I'll come too,' and May said, 'I'm not going in that smelly place again.' So I went and he came too, and we talked in front of the cage of a very lovely wolf, all about animals. He's been a schoolmaster, and he's the sort of man I'd like for a pal—really, love is such an awful effort—being pals is much better and far more amusing."

FATE AT WORK.

A QUEER thing happened to me just at that time. I went into Eric Blind's rooms one day before I'd had these letters from Sybil (Eric and I were both on tour with Ben Greet), and I saw a photo on his desk with a lot of others. I picked it up and said, "Who's this? This is the sort of man Sybil will marry"; and Eric said, "Oh, that's a great pal of mine, Lewis Casson, jolly good chap." Then I had Sybil's letter and I felt fate at work.

I picked the photo up and said, "Who's this? This is the sort of man Sybil will marry"; and Eric said, "Oh, that's Lewis Casson."

The London part of the Horniman Company and the Manchester part here at Dublin divided, the Manchester to return to Lancashire and the London to do a three months' tour. At the end of this tour they were to join the other company again in their own home, Gaiety Theatre, the first repertory theatre in England, which Miss Horniman had started. Sybil was very elated at meeting this lady who had done so much for the theatre and the new Repertory Movement—first at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and now at Manchester, and she wished very much she could join them.

Her luck was in again, for Iden Payne, the Director of the Gaiety, offered her a three weeks' job as understudy when the London Company had finished—so she eagerly accepted. The first day she went into the Gaiety she saw Lewis Casson on the stage, and surprised she was to find that he recognized and remembered her. He came and sat beside her as she was watching rehearsal from the stalls and said, "I hear you've got to get a long part in your head very quickly; I'm very good at teaching people parts — may I help you?" I gather Sybil staggered back a pace and accepted his kind offer, too surprised to refuse. I used to await her letters anxiously.

Lewis Casson at the time of his marriage to Sybil Thorndike.

"Lewis Casson is very nice—he simply got an enormous part into my head very quickly—we got on rather well, at least better than I ever imagined we could, because he has that vile quality of seeing through me. I should imagine he'd never tell a lie—not for any moral reason, but simply because he doesn't care what anyone thinks about him. He never talks about himself at all, which is very attractive. . . . Wonder of wonders, Casson met Hilda Bruce Potter and me in the street and said, 'Too nice a day to stay in Manchester—come for a country walk till theatre time,' so he collared the man called Derwent, and we four went off in a train and got out when we were in quite nice country. It's queer in Manchester: you get a sort of feeling that there isn't any country anywhere, but just a train ride and there you have a river and fields and as nice trees as you could want.

"The Casson man and I walked together all the time, and I made him talk to me about himself. He's had rather the same bringing up as us—you know, all holy and church and being able to laugh at it because you know it too well to be solemn, which is gladdening to my heart. I'm not falling in love, so don't worry—he's much too nice, and he told me that he wasn't going to marry till he could afford a valet and a secretary, because he couldn't be bothered, and I said, 'I'm just like you, I never have intended to marry. Russell and I are always going to live with each other.' So that's all right. Then he began about Granville Barker. Well, I'd like to see this man who everyone thinks is like God—no, more like Napoleon, I imagine; if he says a thing, all these highbrow actors say it's right. You'll be home in the summer, won't you, angel? I've got such yards to tell you about this new acting—very different to Shakespeare, but I think Shakespeare would be all the better for a dose of it.

"I've got a very nice combined room here in Ackers Street with a killing landlady—an awfully wicked woman, I believe, but I like hearing her talk. She never sees any good motive in anything anyone does. I pay twelve-and-sixpence a week, and that includes breakfast and a fire—jolly good; and then I go out with Hilda Potter a lot — she's ripping and awfully clever. Margaret Halston is the leading lady—she has a most lovely face and the people adore her in Manchester; crowds wait at the stage doors to see her come out. She is extremely nice and kind to us all.

"Oh, my dear, and there's a man called Charles Bibby, who is the most glorious actor—every part he plays he becomes in the way that we love—it's nothing to do with make-up; it's his whole being alters. I watch every second of him. I shall learn a great deal about acting from these people

here. Casson's acting interests me—you're frightfully conscious of a brain, not so much that he's *become* the person, but as if he was making *you* see the person and he was giving you suggestions—it's not the way I could work, but it's very interesting, and his speed is most exhilarating. I do detest people who, if they're saying something either beautiful or important, go three times slower in case you miss anything. By the time some of them have got to the end of a sentence you've forgotten the beginning and then you're lost. Casson speaks nearly as fast as you think. Acting is a most entertaining business."

ON TOUR WITH LEWIS CASSON.

SYBIL went back to London after this, and after having been three days at home she was offered some pastoral plays by Lewis Casson, also by Fred Topham and by Nigel Playfair. They did all the usual Shakespeare stuff that's played out of doors. Philip Carr, the son of Comyns Carr, and a great friend of Nigel Playfair, also got up pastorals, and between the lot of them Sybil fitted in a good many plays. Lewis Casson happened to be in the same companies, too, and evidently the friendship ripened. Iden Payne then wrote offering her the next season at the Gaiety, Manchester, to play whatever she was wanted, and in August of that year Sybil met the company again at Brighton.

" I'm very glad Lewis Casson is in the company again," she writes to me, " and I wish you'd buck up and come home; I've got such yards to tell you. That man argues a dreadful amount, but I find he likes heaps of the things I like. I mean, he'll stop hours watching performing dogs on Brighton Pier—and, oh, Russell, such a mercy, he doesn't like games! Not that it really matters to me, but the love of games is such a barrier; I do so dislike them. I expect I've missed something in life feeling that way, but there it is—one can't alter deep-down things like hatreds. We bathe off the end of the pier—Lewis Casson and I did a lovely swim. He's rehearsing 'Candida,' which I'm playing—isn't it glorious for me?—at Exeter next week.

" *Exeter.* I played Candida last night—it's my favourite part so far. Hilda Potter and I 'dig' together this tour, and when we were in the fish shop buying our dinner in came Casson and his great friend who has joined us, called Jules Shaw, a lovely person, wild and volcanicable, Beethoven to look at. Casson came to me and said, 'I watched your Candida last night from a box' (he's not in 'Candida'). 'I've made notes and criticisms; will you come and have some coffee with me, and I'll go through the part with you?' Hilda was furious. 'Like his cheek,' she said. 'No praise, only criticism—he's a fearfully hard man.' Anyway, I made her come and have coffee too, and that man fairly laid me low. I came out of that coffee-shop feeling like a used two-cent stamp, but all the same he said some jolly good things, and I shall do everything he says, because he knows more about it than I do. Wasn't it decent of him to take all these notes? Jules Shaw told Hilda rather a funny thing as we were walking home from the theatre the afternoon after rehearsal. He said, 'Casson was very funny in the box last night; he kept saying, " Ah, that's good," and " I've never seen that bit played better," and then writing copious criticisms and never giving the girl a word of encouragement to-day!' I'm glad he told Hilda that and Hilda told me, or I'd have been very discouraged."

A PROPOSAL OVER COFFEE.

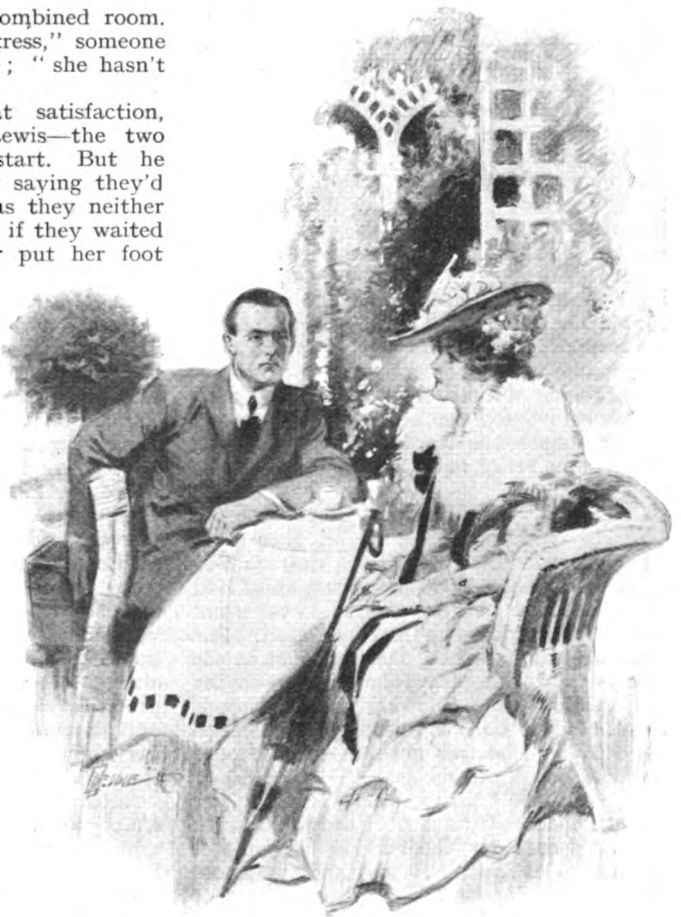
APPARENTLY they got more friendly at Exeter. Sybil is such a queer card, she never makes real friends with anyone unless they are finding fault with her. I think she likes people who edge her on—certainly she's always had plenty of stimulant in her married life. From Birmingham I got a mad, absurd letter from her:—

" Lewis Casson has asked me to marry him. I'm so taken aback. He's never even called me by my Christian name. I didn't fall flat on my face when he proposed in the Kardomah Restaurant over coffee and toast, but the whole room spun round, and so did the houses outside. So I suppose it means I shall marry him, though everything doesn't look quite as mother says it ought to when you're in love."

The next we hear is that she is engaged—that father and mother feel she has been rushed into it, as I really believe she was. I believe that Lewis Casson said to himself, " I'm going to marry that girl," and she was helpless. Sybil is the most absurd person. Father went up to Carlisle to stay with Sybil, to remonstrate with her and ask her to think a little longer—strict injunctions from mother to stop the affair, as she wanted Sybil to marry someone who would give her a beautiful house and a beautiful life and a *salon* where the quality should meet and air their opinions, with Sybil saying the right word at the right moment, dressed in charming clothes and looking delightful. Not for Sybil, though! She'd far rather have a poor actor and trundle round

the provinces living in a combined room. "She'll never be a star actress," someone said to me about that time; "she hasn't the taste."

Father, to Sybil's great satisfaction, got on very well with Lewis—the two made friends from the start. But he upset mother frightfully by saying they'd like the marriage at once as they neither of them would be better off if they waited three months. But mother put her foot down one day when she was sitting on the pier at Blackpool, whither the lovers had flown for a week-end, to argue about the wedding, and said, "Sybil must have a beautiful wedding—all the clergy and people of Rochester and Aylesford would think it extremely odd if she didn't," and Lewis said, "Oh! would that matter very much?" Mother was just saved from falling off the pier by Sybil's protective arm, and she thought Lewis had gone too far. I must say I should never give him the prize for tact, but he rose a little in mother's estimation when he and Sybil did a dramatic performance in the hotel that night. "He certainly has a beautiful voice, Sybil, but I hope he won't make you hard—you've always been such a sweet girl in the village," she said afterwards.



"He proposed in the Kardomah Restaurant over coffee and toast."

ACTING FOR GALSWORTHY.

I CAME home shortly after this to find that the marriage was to be at Christmas, and Lewis and Sybil had given in on the wedding and it was to be a great affair! And that autumn at the Gaiety was one of the most interesting Sybil ever spent, for she came in contact with so many of the new writers for the theatre. John Galsworthy came to produce "The Silver Box," in which Sybil was to play the mother, Mrs. Barthwick, and he gave her much wonderful help. She said the first day she was introduced to him he said very quietly to her, "So you are to play Mrs. Barthwick. Will you find it very difficult?" and Sybil, full of beans, said, "Oh, no, not a bit difficult; I love the part." He looked at her silently for a minute and said, "I should think you would find her very hard, but we'll see." Then they started to rehearse, and Sybil said she didn't do one thing right. She never said one thing as it ought to have been said; in fact, she felt hopeless. At last in despair she burst out, "I can't do it, it's too hard. Do you want me to take away everything that is *me?*" "Yes, please," said Mr. Galsworthy, very kindly. "If you would do that I think it would be quite all right. Shall we try again?" and they all fell to once more.

Sybil said that play was very odd—the whole company finding it very miserable, though the characters were interesting to play, and Mr. Galsworthy would occasionally say, "I think you will find a laugh at the end of this line," at which they would look at each other and wonder what sort of a sense of humour his was. They were amazed on the first night and somewhat

shocked to find roar after roar of laughter right through the play, even in the most tensely dramatic scenes. When Mr. Galsworthy came round after he certainly had the laugh on all of them, and luckily they had all believed in him and followed his instructions blindly, and the result was what he wanted. Sybil was tremendously excited when he told her that her Mrs. Barthwick was exactly what he wanted. I think she would have gone through fire and water for Mr. Galsworthy after that. She always says she thinks that "The Silver Box" is a perfect play—it's a model to build plays on. It gives her the same sort of pleasure as a Mozart Sonata—not a note, not a word must be misplaced: each is absolutely necessary to the shape—the whole and the phrasing must be as strict and careful, too.

SYBIL MEETS THE GREEKS.

THIS autumn gave Sybil her first acquaintance with Greek drama. She had always been keen from childhood on the Greek heroes—though never from the plays, which she had not read. She always wanted to play Hecuba, just as she always wanted to play Joan of Arc—loving the characters but knowing no plays about them. Lewis Casson produced the "Hippolytus" during this autumn—and here is Sybil's other "perfect play." "The Silver Box" and the "Hippolytus" stand to her with "Macbeth" as perfect dramatic form. She was cast for the goddess Artemis in the Euripides "Hippolytus," and the translation of Professor Gilbert Murray was of course used. Lewis had been in the production of this under Granville Barker at the Court. It had a tremendous effect on Sybil—it has been the biggest influence in her theatrical career, this Greek drama. She was carried into another world, she says, and doors opened into something of which she had never even dreamed. This was a very beautiful production—Lewis counts it as one of the productions he is most proud of. Meeting Professor Murray has all been mixed up with meeting Greek drama, and I think the influence he exercised over her is one of the things for which she is most grateful in life. She said to me once, "I think Gilbert Murray's life is as near perfect as I can imagine—working at magnificent stuff like the Greeks and never troubling about himself at all."

I believe it was at the first performance of the "Hippolytus" here that the author was shouted for—and Gilbert Murray's name was shouted. He rose and said the author, he was sorry to say, had been dead more than two thousand years, but he felt he would have been very pleased with the performance. Sybil said she found Artemis so terribly hard to do—struggling to get rid of anything personal and Gilbert Murray (just as Galsworthy) never being satisfied. One day, after Herculean struggles with the goddess, Murray said to her, "Yes, it's getting on. If you would try to be like opalescent dawn I think it might be very nice." Sybil said she felt anything but like opalescent dawn with tears of struggle and anguish on her face, which probably was very dirty by this time and all agitated inside, but she said it made her know what she wasn't like, and from that time she began to play Artemis—so beautiful and lovely a part. She had a chance of playing it some seventeen years after, when in their own management Lewis produced "Hippolytus" again and she played Phædia. The girl who was to play Artemis was taken suddenly ill, and Sybil, who had died earlier in the play, came on unbeknown to the audience as Artemis, and had the same thrill as on that first tour—memorable performance, because she swore her allegiance to Greek drama from that moment, and her love was given to it for life.

Sybil Thorndike—By Her Brother

Further Interesting Chapters from the Life of Our Greatest Actress, by Russell Thorndike, will appear in early issues.

A NEW "CHALLENGER" STORY

When the World Screamed

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENT.

Professor Challenger, the famous explorer of the "Lost World," had called in the help of Mr. Peerless Jones, expert in Artesian borings, to prove the Professor's theory that the earth was a huge living body similar in structure to a sea-urchin, with a hard outer shell. The Professor had sunk a shaft eight miles deep at Hengist Down, in Sussex, thus piercing the earth's shell and exposing the sensitive core. "I propose to let the earth know that there is at least one person—George Edward Challenger who calls for attention," he had said; and with a jab of Mr. Peerless Jones's borer he would make the earth take notice. Mr. Peerless Jones had been taken down to Hengist Down by Edward Malone, Challenger's friend and companion in the "Lost World" adventures, to see the closely-guarded shaft.

THERE was an annexe to the engine-house into which he led me. A number of baggy suits of the lightest tussore material were hanging from the wall. Following Malone's example I took off every stitch of my clothes, and put on one of these suits, together with a pair of rubber-soled slippers. Malone finished before I did and left the dressing-room. A moment later I heard a noise like ten dog-fights rolled into one, and rushing out I found my friend rolling on the ground with his arms round the workman who was helping to stack my artesian tubing. He was endeavouring to tear something from him to which the other was most desperately clinging. But Malone was too strong for him, tore the object out of his grasp, and danced upon it until it was shattered to pieces. Only then did I recognize that it was a photographic camera. My grimy-faced artisan rose ruefully from the floor.

"Confound you, Ted Malone!" said he. "That was a new ten-guinea machine."

"Can't help it, Roy. I saw you take the snap, and there was only one thing to do."

"How the devil did you get mixed up with my outfit?" I asked, with righteous indignation.

The rascal winked and grinned. "There are always ways and means," said he. "But don't blame your foreman. He thought it was just a rag. I swapped clothes with his assistant, and in I came."

"And out you go," said Malone. "No use arguing, Roy. If Challenger were here he would set the dogs on you. I've been in a hole myself, so I won't be hard, but I am watchdog here, and I can bite as well as bark. Come on! Out you march!"

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So our enterprising visitor was marched by two grinning workmen out of the compound. So now the public will at last understand the genesis of that wonderful four-column article headed "Mad Dream of a Scientist," with the sub-title "A Bee-line to Australia," which appeared in *The Adviser* some days later and brought Challenger to the verge of apoplexy, and the editor of *The Adviser* to the most disagreeable and dangerous interview of his lifetime. The article was a highly coloured and exaggerated account of the adventure of Roy Perkins, "our experienced war correspondent," and it contained such purple passages as "this hirsute bully of Enmore Gardens," "a compound guarded by barbed wire, plug-uglies, and bloodhounds," and finally, "I was dragged from the edge of the Anglo-Australian tunnel by two ruffians, the more savage being a Jack-of-all-trades whom I had previously known by sight as a hanger-on of the journalistic profession, while the other, a sinister figure in a strange tropical garb, was posing as an Artesian engineer, though his appearance was more reminiscent of Whitechapel." Having ticked us off in this way, the rascal had an elaborate description of rails at the pit mouth, and of a zigzag excavation by which funicular trains were to burrow into the earth. The only practical inconvenience arising from the article was that it notably increased that line of loafers who sat upon the South Downs waiting for something to happen. The day came when it did happen and when they wished themselves elsewhere.

My foreman with his faked assistant had littered the place with all my apparatus, my bellbox, my crowsfoot, the V-drills, the rods, and the weight, but Malone insisted that we disregard all that and descend ourselves to the lowest level. To this end we entered the cage, which was of latticed steel, and in the company of the chief engineer we shot down into the bowels of the earth. There were a series of automatic lifts, each with its own operating station hollowed out in the side of the excavation. They operated with great speed, and the experience was more like a vertical railway journey than the deliberate fall which we associate with the British lift.

Since the cage was latticed and brightly illuminated, we had a clear view of the strata through which we passed. I was conscious of each of them as we flashed past. There were the sallow lower chalk, the coffee-coloured Hastings beds, the lighter Ashburnham beds, the dark carboniferous clays, and then, gleaming in the electric light, band after band of jet-black, sparkling coal alternating with the rings of clay. Here and there brickwork had been inserted, but as a rule the shaft was self-supported, and one could but marvel at the immense labour and mechanical skill which it represented. Beneath the coal-beds I was conscious of jumbled strata of a concrete-like appearance, and then we shot down into the primitive granite, where the quartz crystals gleamed and twinkled as if the dark walls were sown with the dust of diamonds. Down we went and ever down—lower now than mortals had ever before penetrated. The archaic rocks varied wonderfully in colour, and I can never forget one broad belt of rose-coloured felspar, which shone with an unearthly beauty before our powerful lamps. Stage after stage, and lift after lift, the air getting ever closer and hotter until even the light tussore garments were intolerable and the sweat was pouring down into those rubber-soled slippers. At last, just as I was thinking that I could stand it no more, the last lift came to a stand, and we stepped out upon a circular platform which had been cut in the rock. I noticed that Malone gave a curiously suspicious glance round at the walls as he did so. If I did not know him to be among the bravest of men I should say that he was exceedingly nervous.

"FUNNY-LOOKING stuff," said the chief engineer, passing his hand over the nearest section of rock. He held it to the light and showed that it was glistening with a curious slimy scum. "There have been shiverings and tremblings down here. I don't know what we are dealing with. The Professor seems pleased with it, but it's all new to me."

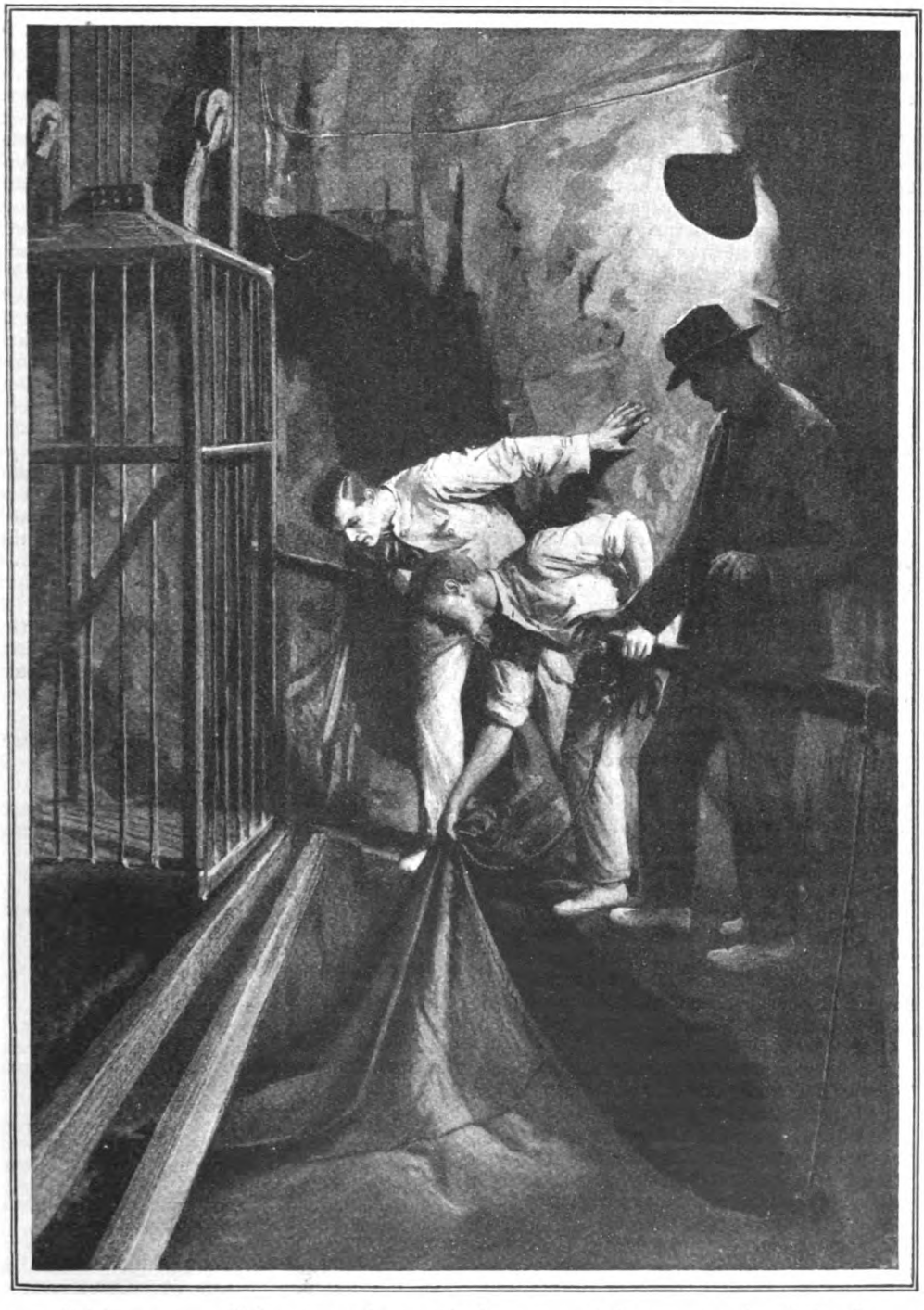
"I am bound to say I've seen that wall fairly shake itself," said Malone. "Last time I was down here we fixed those two cross-beams for your drill, and when we cut into it for the supports it winced at every stroke. The old man's theory seemed absurd in solid old London town, but down here, eight miles under the surface, I am not so sure about it."

"If you saw what was under that tarpaulin you would be even less sure," said the engineer. "All this lower rock cut like cheese, and when we were through it we came on a new formation like nothing on earth. 'Cover it up! Don't touch it!' said the Professor. So we tarpaulined it according to his instructions and there it lies."

"Could we not have a look?"

A frightened expression came over the engineer's lugubrious countenance.

"It's no joke disobeying the Professor," said he. "He is so damn cunning, too, that you never know what check he has set on you. However, we'll have a peep and chance it."



Seizing a rope which connected up with the corner of the covering, he disclosed half-a-dozen square yards of the surface beneath it.

He turned down our reflector lamp so that the light gleamed upon the black tarpaulin. Then he stooped and, seizing a rope which connected up with the corner of the covering, he disclosed half-a-dozen square yards of the surface beneath it.

It was a most extraordinary and terrifying sight. The floor consisted of some greyish material, glazed and shiny, which rose and fell in a slow palpitation. The throbs were not direct, but gave the impression of a gentle ripple or rhythm, which ran across the surface. This surface itself was not entirely homogeneous, but beneath it, seen as through ground glass, there were dim whitish patches or vacuoles, which varied constantly in shape and size. We stood all three gazing spellbound at this extraordinary sight.

"Does look rather like a skinned animal," said Malone, in an awed whisper. "The old man may not be so far out with his blessed echinus."

"Good Lord!" I cried. "And am I to plunge a harpoon into that beast!"

"That's your privilege, my son," said Malone, "and, sad to relate, unless I give it a miss in baulk I shall have to be at your side when you do it."

"Well, I won't," said the head engineer, with decision. "I was never clearer on anything than I am on that. If the old man insists, then I resign my portfolio. Good Lord, look at that!"

The grey surface gave a sudden heave upwards, welling towards us as a wave does when you look down from the bulwarks. Then it subsided and the dim beatings and throbbings continued as before. Barforth lowered the rope and replaced the tarpaulin.

"Seemed almost as if it knew we were here," said he. "Why should it swell up towards us like that? I expect the light had some sort of effect upon it."

"What am I expected to do now?" I asked.

Mr. Barforth pointed to two beams which lay across the pit just under the stopping place of the lift. There was an interval of about nine inches between them.

"That was the old man's idea," said he. "I think I could have fixed it better, but you might as well try to argue with a mad buffalo. It is easier and safer just to do whatever he says. His idea is that you should use your six-inch bore and fasten it in some way between these supports."

"Well, I don't think there would be much difficulty about that," I answered. "I'll take the job over as from to-day."

It was, as one might imagine, the strangest experience of my very varied life, which has included well-sinking in every continent upon earth. As Professor Challenger was so insistent that the operation should be started from a distance, and as I began to see a good deal of sense in his contention, I had to plan some method of electric control, which was easy enough as the pit was wired from top to bottom. With infinite care my foreman, Peters, and I brought down our lengths of tubing and stacked them on the rocky ledge. Then we raised the stage of the lowest lift so as to give ourselves room. As we proposed to use the percussion system, for it would not do to trust entirely to gravity, we hung our hundred-pound weight over a pulley beneath the lift, and ran our tubes down beneath it with a V-shaped terminal. Finally, the rope which held the weight was secured to the side of the shaft in such a way that an electrical discharge would release it. It was delicate and difficult work done in a more than tropical heat, and with the ever-present feeling that a slip of a foot or the dropping of a tool upon the tarpaulin beneath us might bring about some inconceivable catastrophe. We were awed, too, by our surroundings. Again and again I have seen a strange quiver and shiver pass down the walls, and have even felt a dull throb against my hands as I touched them. Neither Peters nor I was very sorry when we signalled for the last time that we were ready for the surface, and were able to report to Mr. Barforth that Professor Challenger could make his experiment as soon as he chose.

AND it was not long that we had to wait. Only three days after my date of completion my notice arrived.

It was an ordinary invitation card such as one uses for "at homes," and it ran thus:—

PROFESSOR G. E. CHALLENGER,
F.R.S., M.D., D.Sc., etc.
(late President Zoological Institute and holder of so many honorary degrees and appointments that they overtax the capacity of this card)
requests the attendance of
MR. JONES (no lady)
at 11.30 a.m. of Tuesday, June 21st, to witness a remarkable triumph of mind over matter
at
HENGIST DOWN, SUSSEX.
Special train Victoria 10.5. Passengers pay their own fares. Lunch after the experiment or not—according to circumstances. Station, Storrington.
R.S.V.P. (and at once with name in block letters), 14Bis, Enmore Gardens, S.W.

I found that Malone had just received a similar missive over which he was chuckling. "It is mere swank sending it to us," said he. "We have to be there whatever happens, as the hangman said to the murderer. But I tell you this has set all London buzzing.

The old man is where he likes to be, with a pin-point limelight right on his hairy old head."

And so at last the great day came. Personally I thought it well to go down the night before so as to be sure that everything was in order. Our borer was fixed in position, the weight was adjusted, the electric contacts could be easily switched on, and I was satisfied that my own part in this strange experiment would be carried out without a hitch. The electric controls were operated at a point some five hundred yards from the mouth of the shaft, to minimize any personal danger. When on the fateful morning, an ideal English summer day, I came to the surface with my mind assured, I climbed half-way up the slope of the Down in order to have a general view of the proceedings.

All the world seemed to be coming to Hengist Down. As far as we could see the roads were dotted with people. Motor-cars came bumping and swaying down the lanes, and discharged their passengers at the gate of the compound. This was in most cases the end of their progress. A powerful band of janitors waited at the entrance, and no promises or bribes, but only the production of the coveted buff tickets, could get them any farther. They dispersed, therefore, and joined the vast crowd which was already assembling on the side of the hill and covering the ridge with a dense mass of spectators. The place was like Epsom Downs on the Derby day. Inside the compound certain areas had been wired off, and the various privileged people were conducted to the particular pen to which they had been allotted. There was one for peers, one for members of the House of Commons, and one for the heads of learned societies and the men of fame in the scientific world, including Le Pellier of the Sorbonne and Dr. Driesinger of the Berlin Academy. A special reserved enclosure with sandbags and a corrugated iron roof was set aside for three members of the Royal Family.

At a quarter past eleven a succession of chars-à-bancs brought up the specially-invited guests from the station and I went down into the compound to assist at the reception. Professor Challenger stood by the select enclosure, resplendent in frock-coat, white waistcoat, and burnished top-hat, his expression a blend of overpowering and almost offensive benevolence, mixed with most portentous self-importance. "Clearly a typical victim of the Jehovah complex," as one of his critics described him. He assisted in conducting, and occasionally in propelling, his guests into their proper places, and then, having gathered the *élite* of the company around him, he took his station upon the top of a convenient hillock and looked around him with the air of the chairman who expects some welcoming applause. As none was forthcoming, he plunged at once into his subject, his voice booming to the farthest extremities of the enclosure.

"GENTLEMEN," he roared, "upon this occasion I have no need to include the ladies. If I have not invited them to be present with us this morning it is not, I can assure you, for want of appreciation, for I may say"—with elephantine humour and mock modesty—"that the relations between us upon both sides have always been excellent, and indeed intimate. The real reason is that some small element of danger is involved in our experiment, though it is not sufficient to justify the discomposure which I see upon many of your faces. It will interest the members of the Press to know that I have reserved very special seats for them upon the spoil banks which immediately overlook the scene of the operation. They have shown an interest which is sometimes indistinguishable from impertinence in my affairs, so that on this occasion at least they cannot complain that I have been remiss in studying their convenience. If nothing happens, which is always possible, I have at least done my best for them. If, on the other hand, something does happen, they will be in an excellent position to experience and record it, should they ultimately feel equal to the task.

"It is, as you will readily understand, impossible for a man of science to explain to what I may describe, without undue disrespect, as the common herd, the various reasons for his conclusions or his actions. I hear some unmannerly interruptions, and I will ask the gentleman with the horn spectacles to cease waving his umbrella. (A voice: "Your description of your guests, sir, is most offensive.") Possibly it is my phrase, 'the common herd,' which has ruffled the gentleman. Let us say, then, that my listeners are a most uncommon herd. We will not quibble over phrases. I was about to say, before I was interrupted by this unseemly remark, that the whole matter is very fully and lucidly discussed in my forthcoming volume upon the earth, which I may describe with all due modesty as one of the epoch-making books of the world's history. (General interruption and cries of "Get down to the facts!" "What are we here for?" "Is this a practical joke?") I was about to make the matter clear, and if I have any further interruption I shall be compelled to take means to preserve decency and order, the lack of which is so painfully obvious. The position is, then, that I have sunk a shaft through the crust of the earth

and that I am about to try the effect of a vigorous stimulation of its sensory cortex, a delicate operation which will be carried out by my subordinates, Mr. Peerless Jones, a self-styled expert in Artesian borings, and Mr. Edward Malone, who represents myself upon this occasion. The exposed and sensitive substance will be pricked, and how it will react is a matter for conjecture. If you will now kindly take your seats these two gentlemen will descend into the pit and make the final adjustments. I will then press the electric button upon this table and the experiment will be complete."

An audience after one of Challenger's harangues usually felt as if, like the earth, its protective epidermis had been pierced and its nerves laid bare. This assembly was no exception, and there was a dull murmur of criticism and resentment as they returned to their places. Challenger sat alone on the top of the mound, a small table beside him, his black mane and beard vibrating with excitement, a most portentous figure. Neither Malone nor I could admire the scene, however, for we hurried off upon our extraordinary errand. Twenty minutes later we were at the bottom of the shaft, and had pulled the tarpaulin from the exposed surface.

It was an amazing sight which lay before us. By some strange cosmic telepathy the old planet seemed to know that an unheard-of liberty was about to be attempted. The exposed surface was like a boiling pot. Great grey bubbles rose and burst with a crackling report. The air-spaces and vacuoles below the skin separated and coalesced in an agitated activity. The transverse ripples were stronger and faster in their rhythm than before. A dark purple fluid appeared to pulse in the tortuous anastomoses of channels which lay under the surface. The throb of life was in it all. A heavy smell made the air hardly fit for human lungs.

My gaze was fixed upon this strange spectacle when Malone at my elbow gave a sudden gasp of alarm. "My God, Jones!" he cried. "Look there!"

I gave one glance, and the next instant I released the electric connection and I sprang into the lift. "Come on!" I cried. "It may be a race for life!"

What we had seen was indeed alarming. The whole lower shaft, it would seem, had shared in the increased activity which we had observed below, and the walls were throbbing and pulsing in sympathy. This movement had reacted upon the holes in which the beams rested, and it was clear that with a very little further retraction—a matter of inches—the beams would fall. If they did so then the sharp end of my rod would, of course, penetrate the earth quite independently of the electric release.

Both of us were swept off our feet as by a cyclone.

Before that happened it was vital that Malone and I should be out of the shaft. To be eight miles down in the earth with the chance any instant of some extraordinary convulsion taking place was a terrible prospect. We fled wildly for the surface.

Shall either of us ever forget that nightmare journey? The lifts whizzed and buzzed and yet the minutes seemed to be hours. As we reached each stage we sprang out, jumped into the next lift, touched the release, and flew onwards. Through the steel latticed roof we could see far away the little circle of light which marked the mouth of the shaft. Now it grew wider and wider, until it came full circle and our glad eyes rested upon the brickwork of the opening. Up we shot, and up—and then at last in a glad mad moment of joy and thankfulness we sprang out of our prison and had our feet upon the green sward once more. But it was touch and go. We had not gone thirty paces from the shaft when far down in the depths my iron dart shot into the nerve ganglion of old Mother Earth and the great moment had arrived.

What was it happened? Neither Malone nor I was in a position to say, for both of us

were swept off our feet as by a cyclone and swirled along the grass, revolving round and round like two curling-stones upon an ice rink. At the same time our ears were assailed by the most horrible yell that ever yet was heard. Who is there of all the hundreds who have attempted it who has ever yet described adequately that terrible cry? It was a howl in which pain, anger, menace, and the outraged majesty of Nature all blended into one hideous shriek. For a full minute it lasted, a thousand sirens in one, paralysing all the great multitude with its fierce insistence, and floating away through the still summer air until it went echoing along the whole South Coast and even reached our French neighbours across the Channel. No sound in history has ever equalled the cry of the injured Earth.

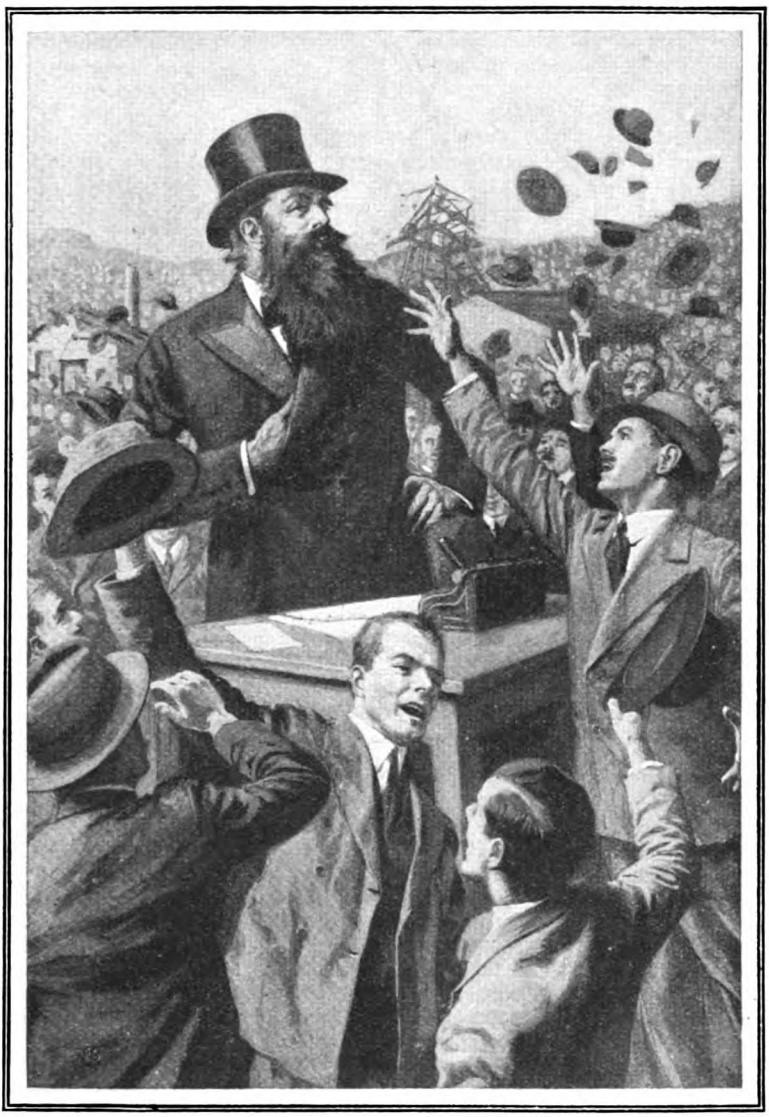
Dazed and deafened, Malone and I were aware of the shock and of the sound, but it is from the narrative of others that we learned the other details of that extraordinary scene.

The first emergence from the bowels of the earth consisted of the lift cages. The other machinery being against the walls escaped the blast, but the solid floors of the cages took the full force of the upward current. When several separate pellets are placed in a blow-pipe they still shoot forth in their order and separately from each other. So the fourteen lift cages appeared one after the other in the air, each soaring after the other, and describing a glorious parabola which landed one of them in the sea near Worthing pier, and a second one in a field not far from Chichester. Spectators have averred that of all the strange sights that they had seen nothing could ever exceed that of the fourteen lift cages sailing serenely through the blue heavens.

Then came the geyser. It was an enormous spout of vile treacly substance of the consistence of tar, which shot up into the air to a height which has been computed at two thousand feet. An inquisitive aeroplane, which had been hovering over the scene, was picked off as by an Archie and made a forced landing, man and machine buried in filth. This horrible stuff, which had a most penetrating and nauseous odour, may have represented the life blood of the planet, or it may be, as Professor Driesinger and the Berlin school maintain, that it is a protective secretion, analogous to that of the skunk, which Nature has provided in order to defend Mother Earth from intrusive Challengers. If that were so the prime offender, seated on his throne upon the hillock, escaped untarnished, while the unfortunate Press were so soaked and saturated, being in the direct line of fire, that none of them was capable of entering decent society for many weeks. This gush of putridity was blown southwards by the breeze, and descended upon the unhappy crowd who had waited so long and so patiently upon the crest of the Downs to see what would happen. There were no casualties. No home was left desolate, but many were made odoriferous, and still carry within their walls some souvenir of that great occasion.

And then came the closing of the pit. As Nature slowly closes a wound from below upwards, so does the Earth with extreme rapidity mend any rent which is made in its vital substance. There was a prolonged high-pitched crash as the sides of the shaft came together, the sound reverberating from the depths, and then rising higher and higher until with a deafening bang the brick circle at the orifice flattened out and clashed together, while a tremor like a small earthquake shook down the spoil banks and piled a pyramid fifty feet high of *débris* and broken iron over the spot where the hole had been. Professor Challenger's experiment was not only finished, it was buried from human sight for ever. If it were not for the obelisk which has now been erected by the Royal Society it is doubtful if our descendants would ever know the exact site of that remarkable occurrence.

AND then came the grand finale. For a long period after these successive phenomena there was a hush and a tense stillness as folk reassembled their wits and tried to realize exactly what had occurred and how it had come about. And then suddenly the mighty achievement, the huge sweep of the conception, the genius and wonder of the execution, broke upon their minds. With one impulse they turned upon Challenger. From every part of the field there came the cries of admiration, and from his hillock he could look down upon the lake of upturned faces broken only by the rise and fall of the waving handkerchiefs. As I look back I see him best as I saw him then. He rose from his chair, his eyes half closed, a smile of conscious merit upon his face, his left hand upon his hip, his right buried in the breast of his frock-coat. Surely that picture will be fixed for ever, for I heard the cameras clicking around me like crickets in a field. The June sun shone golden upon him as he turned gravely bowing to each quarter of the compass. Challenger the super-scientist. Challenger the arch-pioneer, Challenger the first man of all men whom Mother Earth had been compelled to recognize.



Challenger rose from his chair, his eyes half closed, a smile of conscious merit upon his face.

ONLY a word by way of epilogue. It is of course well known that the effect of the experiment was a world-wide one. It is true that nowhere did the injured planet emit such a howl as at the actual point of penetration, but she showed that she was indeed one entity by her conduct elsewhere. Through every vent and every volcano she voiced her indignation. Hecla bellowed until the Icelanders feared a cataclysm. Vesuvius blew its head off. Etna spewed up a quantity of lava, and a suit of half-a-million lira damages has been decided against Challenger in the Italian Courts for the destruction of vineyards. Even in Mexico and in the belt of Central America there were signs of intense Plutonic indignation, and the howls of Stromboli filled the whole Eastern Mediterranean. It has been the common ambition of mankind to set the whole world talking. To set the whole world screaming was the privilege of Challenger alone.

The Painted Jade

By

EDGAR and MARGARET JEPSON

Illustrated by
CYRIL HOLLOWAY

MR. JAMES PULCHRITER came into his library wearing an air of gloom out of keeping with the sunny May morning, and Jenny Bannister, his secretary, smiled. She knew what was the matter with her amiable employer: he had seen an object he desired to add to his famous collection of Oriental art and could not obtain it. From the depth of his gloom she gathered that the object was beautiful and his desire great.

The smile just flickered over her face and vanished, for she was fond of Mr. Pulchriter: he was always courteous and kindly and generous. A look of sympathetic distress appeared on it. She had fallen into the way of looking after him in matters that lay outside her province of secretary, for looking after people was rather her *métier*, and her face, if it missed beauty, had the charm of the faces of those who look after others.

They said "Good morning," and his eyes wandered disconsolately over the treasures of jade and ivory and crystal that stood on the tops of low bookshelves, then turned to Jenny's face.

"A curious and annoying thing has happened," he said. "I can't make head or tail of it. A few days ago I was wandering in the East-end, on the chance of picking up something, and in a small curiosity shop in St. Mary's Street, Tidal Basin, I saw a jade disk, covered, or nearly covered, with gold paint—if it had been quite covered I should not have been able to see that it was jade—translucent green jade—carved with Chinese characters I didn't know and not with the usual archaic characters you see on so many pieces. I went into the shop and found a Chinaman in charge of it, an ordinary, middle-aged Chinaman, except that he was wearing uncommonly well-cut clothes for the East-end. I asked to see the disk, but he wouldn't show it to me or let me handle it. I asked him what he wanted for it, and he said it wasn't for sale. I offered him a good price for it, for, from the quality of the carving, I could see that it was a fine piece, but he wouldn't sell it. And then when I was going out of the shop he started to question me—I'd let him know that I was a collector. He asked me had I ever seen a disk like it, painted or unpainted. I said that, as far as I knew, it was unique; I'd never seen one like it, or heard of one. I came away, and a day or two later I went down and offered him a hundred pounds for it—translucent green jade, you know. He wouldn't sell it; he wouldn't let me handle it; he wouldn't tell me why he had it in the window."

"It's queer," said Jenny.

"It was queer. But that isn't all of it. Yesterday afternoon I saw a new Oriental shop in Earl Street, and in the window another jade disk covered with gold paint. I thought at first it was the same, for it was the same size and colour. But it wasn't the same—the characters were different. I went in to try to get it. A young Chinaman was in charge of this shop, one of those young Chinamen who have been to Oxford. The disk wasn't for sale, and he wouldn't let me handle it."

"That's queerer," said Jenny. "But wouldn't either of them put *any* price on his disk?"

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"Neither," said Mr. Pulchriter.

They were silent, pondering the matter, Mr. Pulchriter gloomily.

Presently Jenny said: "Well, I give it up."

"But that's just what I don't want you to do. I want you to *take* it up," said Mr. Pulchriter, quickly. "My experience is that in a delicate matter like this a woman may succeed where a man fails. They seem to have qualities that come in very useful—intuition and that kind of thing—and, of course, much finer powers of observation than a man. It would be quite hopeless for me to try to solve a mystery like this; but I have a high opinion of your intelligence and tact, and you might. During all the years I've collected, I've only seen four disks of translucent green jade, and every one was a pi—the symbol of Heaven, you know. These two are something quite different, and I've grown extraordinarily keen on getting them; I haven't wanted anything so much for years. But I can't persuade these Chinamen to sell them. You may hit on some way of getting them to part with them, and if you do get them for me, I'll give you a hundred pounds for your trouble."

Jenny's heart leapt in her. A whole hundred pounds! She had never had a whole hundred pounds in her life, nor dreamt of having it.

"I'll certainly do my best!" she said, in rather breathless accents, and her grey eyes shone very brightly on Mr. Pulchriter's refined and distinguished face.

"Then set about it at once," he said, smiling on her and taking out his notecase. "I'm sure you'll succeed. And here are ten pounds for preliminary expenses."

Jenny took the notes and thanked him, put them into her purse, and set about it at once by questioning him about the curiosity shops and their keepers. She learnt very little more from him beyond the fact that he had walked down St. Mary's Street several times before and never seen a curiosity shop in it. She felt that this was a useful fact, that it reduced the possibility of its being a coincidence that there was a piece of painted jade in the East-end and another in the West-end, neither to be handled or sold, to a slight possibility indeed.

There was nothing more to be learnt in Onslow Gardens. She put on her hat and coat and walked briskly to the Knightsbridge Tube Station. In view of the fact that she was in business attire she did not go to the shop in Earl Street; making no more than three changes, she came to Tidal Basin Station and so to St. Mary's Street. She found the disk still in the window of the curiosity shop, in a small glass case, and she studied it carefully and at length; indeed, she made a mental photograph of it that would last. Then she considered the other objects of art in the window. They were of poor quality; she had attended many sales with, or for, Mr. Pulchriter, and she knew that they could be picked up for very little money.

SHE went into the shop and found the ordinary, middle-aged Chinaman in the well-cut suit of which Mr. Pulchriter had spoken. He was sitting behind the counter, reading *The Times*, and he looked at her with indifferent eyes, with none of the interest of a curio merchant who sees a customer enter; she felt that he found her merely a boring interruption.

She asked him if he had any amethyst or jade pendants, and he said that he had not. Then she looked round the shop, examining the objects of art in it and the man who seemed so little eager to sell them. She had only come to consider the lie of the land. The shop was none too full of the dregs of the sales; she believed that she could have stocked it as well for ten pounds; she observed that the dust lay thick on everything. To her womanly eye it wore an air of impermanence; it was not a serious business; she wondered whether it was not merely a setting for the painted jade, and a cheap setting at that. What was the object of the setting?

She came round to the window and looked into it, then said: "I should like to look at that pretty gold disk."

"It isn't for sale," said the Chinaman.

"Then what's it in the window for?" she asked.

For a breath he hesitated; then he said: "It brings customers into the shop, and they buy other things."

His hesitation, short as it was, assured Jenny that he was not speaking the truth. She wondered that a repository of the wisdom of the East should suppose that he could lie successfully to a woman.

"Still, I should like to look at it," she said.

"No, no. It must not be touched," he said, quickly and with animation.

"I do think you're disobliging," she said in a deeply reproachful tone, looking at him with deeply reproachful eyes.

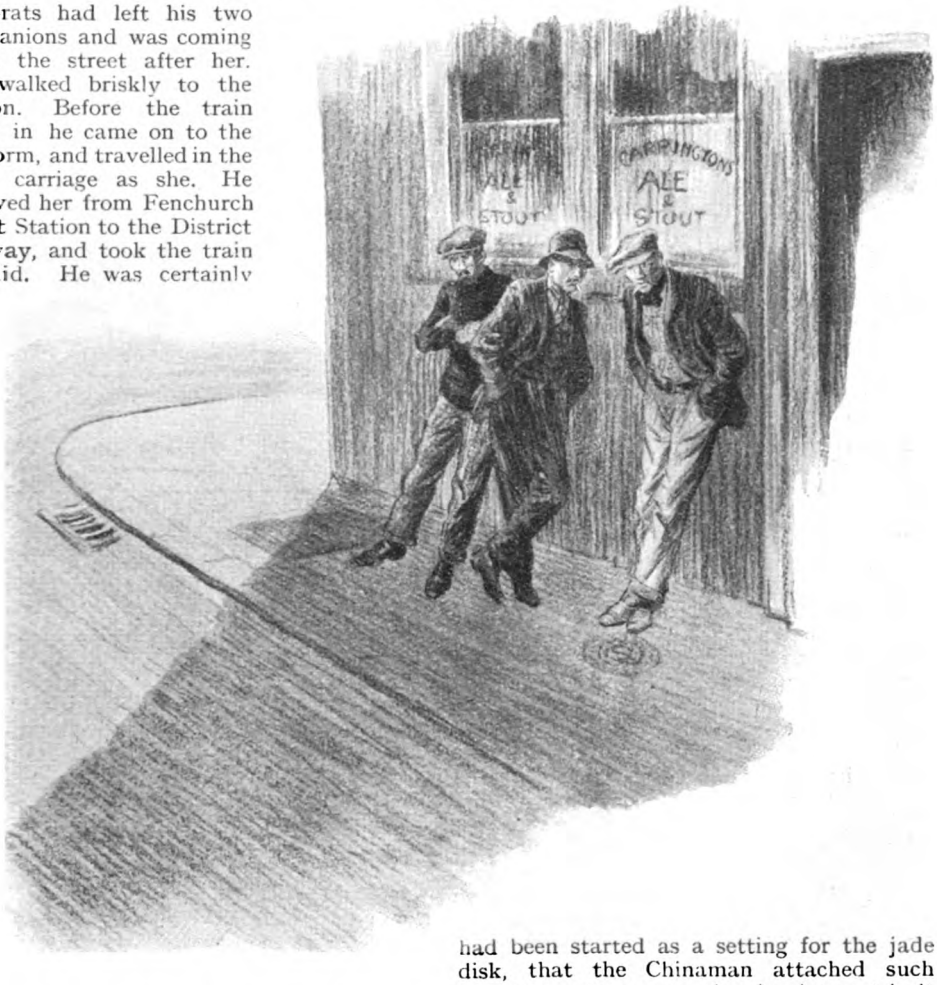
Corrupted by Western influences, he winced ever so slightly.

Having learnt all that there was to be learnt at the moment, and it was not much, she came out of the shop. The Chinaman came to the door of it and looked after her; corrupted by Western influences, he hesitated; then he nodded to the three seedy-

Jenny, who had half turned her head as he nodded, saw the nod.

looking dock-rats who were acting as unnecessary buttresses to the stout wall of the public-house opposite. Thanks to his hesitation, Jenny, who had half turned her head as he nodded, saw the nod. She walked quietly on, looking back in womanly fashion, with the eyes at the back of her head. She perceived that one of the

dock-rats had left his two companions and was coming down the street after her. She walked briskly to the station. Before the train came in he came on to the platform, and travelled in the same carriage as she. He followed her from Fenchurch Street Station to the District Railway, and took the train she did. He was certainly



following her ; she must shake him off. She did so in a very simple fashion ; she remained in the train till Hammersmith Station, left it, and walked briskly down Hammersmith Road with the dock-rat fifty yards behind her. Then, as she had expected, she met a lonely taxi-cab, with no other in sight up the road or down it. She told the driver to drive her to Hyde Park Corner ; the dock-rat came trotting up to get the taxi's number. With that he had to content himself, and through the window at the back of the cab she saw him take the way back to Hammersmith. At Hyde Park Corner she left the taxi, walked into the Tube station, and by tube and omnibus came to the little house, standing in a walled garden, half-way down that cul-de-sac, Melina Place, in which were the two rooms in which she lived.

As she cooked her lunch she pondered her discoveries : that the shop in Tidal Basin had been started as a setting for the jade disk, that the Chinaman attached such importance to persons showing interest in it as to have them followed. They seemed significant, as did the questions of the Chinaman in Earl Street to Mr. Pulchriter : had he possessed, or seen, or heard of a like painted disk ? But the significance of these facts eluded her.

After lunch she put on her prettiest frock and hat and went to Earl Street, again to study the lie of the land. She studied the jade disk and found that Mr. Pulchriter had been right about it : it was of the same size as the disk in Tidal Basin, but the characters on it were different. The objects of art in the window were better than those in the shop in Tidal Basin ; but they were not of the quality one would expect to find in a shop in Earl Street : there was not a piece for which she would have given more than five pounds. She wondered if this shop also was a mere setting for the painted jade, and went into it to study its proprietor. He seemed no more eager, to judge from the

way he looked at her, to sell his objects of art than the Chinaman in Tidal Basin. She said that she would like to look at the gold disk. He said it was not for sale and would not let her handle it. She looked wistfully round the shop and informed herself that the objects of art in it were of the same quality as those in the window, said "Good day," and came out of it surer than ever that these shops were merely settings for the jade disks. But the reason of it she could not find.

SHE walked up to Stewart's and over an ice cudgelled her brains for that reason. She could not find it. Also she cudgelled her brains for some method of getting into closer touch with the Chinamen that she might be in a better position to discover it. She could think of no method, but that did not trouble her: she would. Then she took an omnibus to Onslow Gardens and found Mr. Pulchriter at home, in his smoking-room, smoking with a disconsolate air a very fine cigar. She told him of her seeming discovery about the shops and about the dock-rat. His face grew brighter at learning that things were moving. But with all his knowledge of Chinese manners and customs and folk-lore and religion, he could find no reason for painting the disks or for their being in two shop windows in London, and neither to be handled nor sold. Also he could devise no method by which she could be brought into closer contact with the Chinamen who owned them. But the discussion of the problem had quickened Jenny's wits; an idea came to her.

Mr. Pulchriter, buying at sales, often bought several pieces in a lot, only one of which he desired for his collection. The rest he put into a cabinet and did not show proudly to other collectors: but many of them made pleasing gifts to his friends. In that cabinet Jenny found a camphor jade disk of the same size as the painted green disks of the Chinamen, and carved with the archaic characters which bring good fortune, and borrowed it. Then she asked leave of absence for a fortnight, for she did not wish the Chinese curio merchants to learn of her connection with him. On her way home she bought a bottle of gold paint and at home she painted the disk. The result was pleasing: it looked very like the disks of the Chinamen.

She did no more that night, but next morning she put on a frock and hat that would serve for Tidal Basin and Earl Street, wrapped her disk in several thicknesses of tissue-paper, put it in her hand-bag, and took her way to Tidal Basin. As she came down St. Mary's Street she perceived that the three dock-rats again buttressed the walls of the public-house, and that the worthy who had followed her recognized her and drew the attention of his companions to her. She went into the shop, her heart beating a little quicker, and found the Chinaman again reading *The Times*.

She smiled upon him, a forgiving smile. And when Jenny smiled, anyone who had been disposed to consider her a plain, uninteresting girl had at once to reconsider his opinion. Corrupted by Western influences, the Chinaman smiled too, briefly, and became again orientally inscrutable.

"I've been wondering whether, though you don't want to sell that gold disk, you'd like to buy one," she said, slowly.

The Chinaman ceased to be orientally inscrutable, and said, eagerly: "Have you got one?"

"Yes," said Jenny, taking the disk from her hand-bag and unwrapping it. "It's exactly like yours, only the letters on it are larger." And she held it out to him.

He almost snatched it from her and studied it carefully. Then he said: "Will you please come this way?" and lifted the flap of the counter.

Jenny went through it. He opened the door behind him and ushered her into a small, bare, uncarpeted room, furnished indeed only with two easy-chairs and a deal table. In one of the easy-chairs sat a large, fat Chinaman of fifty, apparently meditating, and the curio merchant addressed him in Chinese, in excited accents, plainly telling him that Jenny had come to sell the disk, and handed it to him.

The large Chinaman rose heavily to his feet and waddled to the dirty window, and examined it with sparkling eyes. Slowly his face grew dull and expressionless, the sparkle died out of his eyes. He shook his head, and spoke in Chinese to the curio merchant, who turned on Jenny and asked her who had sent her to sell the disk.

"Nobody sent me. It was entirely my own idea. If you won't sell your disk, it must be valuable. Why shouldn't mine be?" she said.

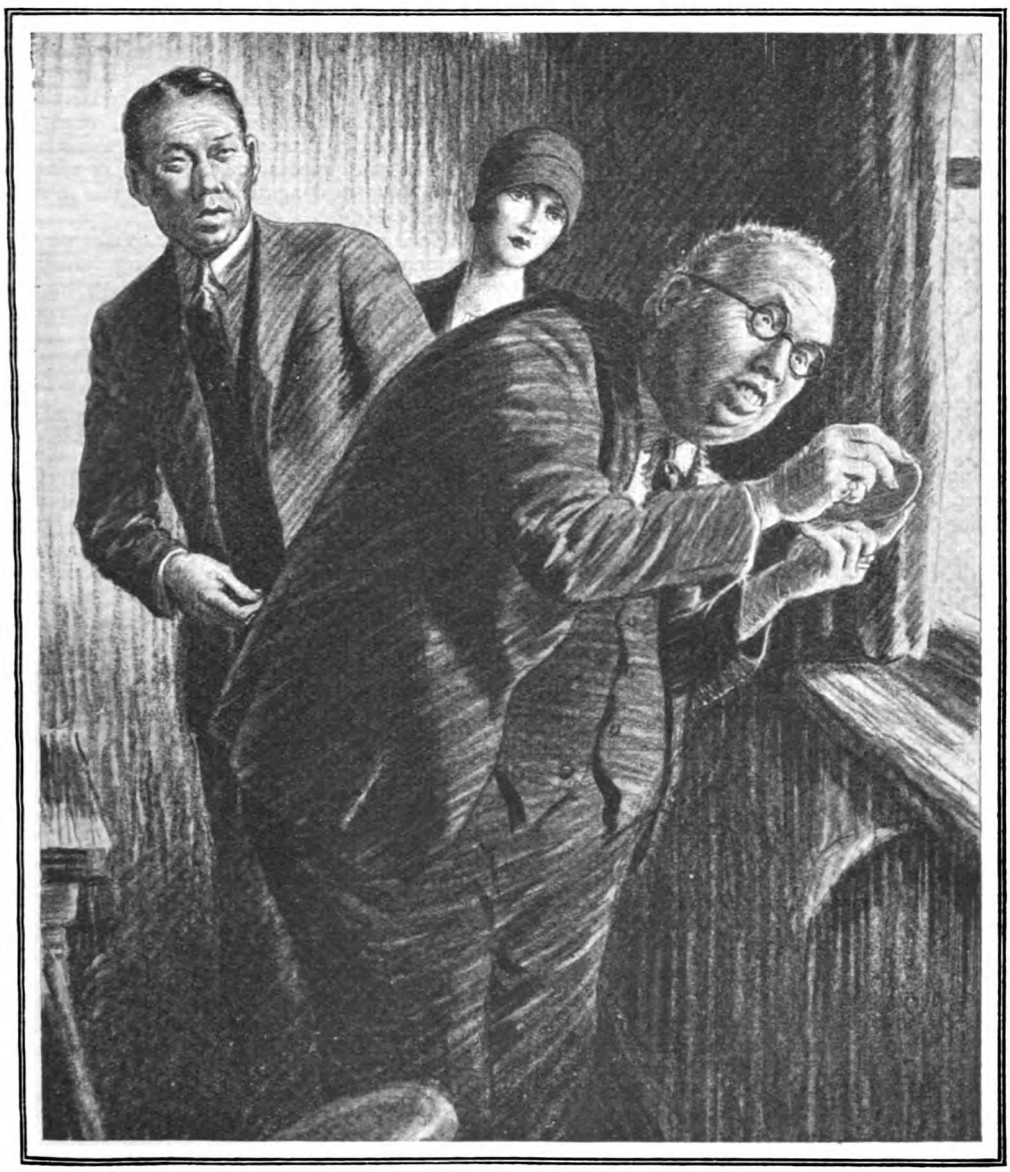
They stared at her. She could not tell whether they believed her or not.

"Where did you get it from?" said the Chinaman, in a hectoring tone.

"It's no business of yours, unless you want to buy it," said Jenny sharply, holding out her hand for the disk. "But as a matter of fact it was given me by a friend."

He hesitated; then he said: "No; I don't want to buy it. It is not valuable."

He handed it to her; she wrapped it up in the tissue-paper and dropped it into her hand-bag. He opened the door and followed her into the shop. As they came into it the shop door was opened with a jerk that sent the bell above it jangling



The large Chinaman waddled to the dirty window and examined the disk with sparkling eyes.

furiously, and two men entered with a businesslike air. The first, a short, hatchet-faced, sharp-featured man, with a small hammer in his hand, turned to the window; the second, a hulking ruffian, with a broken nose set in a large, bloated, wrinkled face, sprang at the curio merchant and gripped him with enormous hands.

Jenny hesitated, then dashed for the shop door and yelled to the dock-rats on the other side of the road: "They're robbing the shop!"

As she did so, she heard the glass above the disk smash. The dock-rats ran across the road. She turned and barred the exit of the hatchet-faced man, just long enough to let them reach the door and tumble through it and grip him, as the fat Chinaman came through the inner door and the counter and promptly collared the big

man with the broken nose. Jenny had never seen seven men engaged in a fierce rough-and-tumble; she saw them now and heard them and felt them. They bumped her and trod on her toes and jabbed their elbows into her. Then the fight swirled to the back of the shop; somehow she got through the door and ran down the street—her one thought was to escape giving evidence in a police-court. At the end of the street she dropped into a swift walk and hurried to the Tidal Basin Station. A train was coming in; in an immense relief she stepped into the last carriage. The train started; as the carriage she was in passed the entrance to the platform, the hatchet-faced man who had stolen the disk came leaping down the stairs and dashed for the door of it. A porter barred his way; he ran into him with a violence that sent him staggering, and missed the train. Was he escaping, she wondered, or could he have followed her; and, if he had, why?

AT Fenchurch Street, as she came down the steps of the station these questions were answered. Something hard in the pocket of her coat struck against her hand. She had put nothing into that pocket. She slipped her hand into it, found something hard and circular, and drew out the disk that had lain in the window of the curiosity shop in Tidal Basin!

She fairly gasped; then she perceived what had happened: the hatchet-faced man, fearful of losing his prize, had rid himself of it for the time being, by slipping it into her pocket, hoping to recover it from her later, perhaps even before she knew she had it.

Well, she had one of the two disks. But she had acquired it in such a fashion that she might as well have never acquired it at all, for it was clear to her that she must return it to its owner, the Chinaman. She tried to find some escape from this plain duty. There was none; but it occurred to her that there was no need to return it to its owner immediately. She might very well wait and see what happened; also she might negotiate. But she wished not to have it on her in view of the next step she was taking. She found a small stationer's in a by-street, procured a cardboard box, paper, string, and sealing-wax, wrapped up the disk and addressed it to herself at her home, registered it, and posted it. Then she walked briskly to Earl Street and went into the curiosity shop.

The young Chinaman was behind the counter, and looking round the shop was a tall, slim, good-looking young man. He was frowning, and seemed to be in some rather serious trouble. She wished she could help him.

As she came to the counter he turned to the young Chinaman and said: "Sure you won't change your mind?" glanced at the plain, uninteresting girl, hesitated, and, as if to pass the time till she went, began to examine the pieces of inferior, recently-carved jade and agate in one of the glass-fronted cabinets.

"Good morning," said Jenny to the young Chinaman. "I've been thinking that if you don't want to sell that gold disk in the window, it must be very valuable. Would you like to buy one like it?"

"A gold disk like the one in the window?" said the young Chinaman, quickly. "Where is it?"

"In my hand-bag," said Jenny.

"Let me see it," he said, eagerly.

She handed it to him; he examined it carefully, stepped to the door behind the counter, said something in Chinese. Out of the door came a large, fat Chinaman, astonishingly like the one in the room behind the shop in Tidal Basin. Like that double, he took the disk and examined it with shining eyes. They went dull, and he spoke in Chinese, rather glumly, to the young Chinaman, and handed the disk back to him. Both of them stared at Jenny.

"Where did you get this from?" said the younger one sharply in a hectoring tone.

"Are you going to buy it?" she said, quietly, and she was aware that the good-looking young man had turned from the cabinet and was taking a keen interest in what was happening.

The young Chinaman shook his head and said: "No; I do not wish to buy it. It is not valuable."

Jenny bent forward quickly and rather snatched it out of his hand and said: "Then it can't interest you to know how I got it."

The young Chinaman made a quick step towards the counter-flap; the elder caught his arm and checked him. They watched Jenny wrap up the disk in its tissue-paper and put it into her hand-bag. She said "Good morning," and walked out of the shop.

The good-looking young man came out of it on her heels, and she had not taken three steps before he was beside her and raised his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "But may I see that gold disk you want to sell? I might buy it."

He spoke at an unfortunate moment, for he took her attention as the young Chinaman came to the door of the shop and nodded to a stocky, hard-faced young man, and a rather harder-faced young woman, who had been

looking into the window of a shop opposite ever since the good-looking young man entered the Chinaman's shop.

"Might you?" she said, in non-committal accents, looking up into his eager face.

"I might. Where can I have a look at it? What about Stewart's?"

It seemed as good a place as any to Jenny, and they walked to Stewart's, and upstairs, and sat down in a far corner of the room. The young man ordered coffee and cakes. Jenny handed the disk to him. He took it from her eagerly and examined it in an even greater excitement than had the Chinaman. Then his face fell.

"I'm afraid it isn't one of the disks I'm looking for," he said, dolefully, then he added, "But perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me how you got hold of it? Jade disks painted gold are uncommonly rare, and it may have some connection with the two I'm looking for. One of them is the disk in that Chinaman's shop window, and I don't know where the other is."

"It's in the post—on its way to me," said Jenny.

"What on earth do you mean?" he cried.

"Well, you tell me what the mystery of these painted disks is, and I'll tell you what I know about them."

He looked at her hard, hesitating, and perceived that his first impression, that she was a plain and uninteresting girl, had been wrong. Certainly her mouth was too large and her nose a little too short for her face, but it was a piquant face, and the grey eyes under the level brows were limpid wells of candour astonishingly attractive. Her skin was very clear and her hair a delightful brown. She had the *beauté du diable*, health and freshness and vitality, in an uncommon degree.

His hesitation passed; he said: "I'm pretty shy of talking about them. It's an awkward business—especially with these Chinamen in it. But there are three of these disks, and two of them are in the hands of thieves. The disk in the Oriental shop is one of the stolen ones."

"Then why don't you get the police to recover it for you?" she said, quickly.

"There's no evidence that it's mine. My uncle left me the green jade disks painted gold. He's dead, and two of them were stolen from him just before he died. Who can swear that the disk in the shop is one of them? There may be many green jade disks painted gold."

"I see. But there aren't," said Jenny. "But why are they in shop windows? The one that I posted to myself was in a shop window—in the East-end."

"Well, you see, two of them are no use without the third, except as objects of art, and——"

"They're trying to get into touch with the owner of the third! What a duffer I was not to see that it was something of the kind at once!" Jenny broke in.

"And they've got into touch with him, though they don't know it," said the young man.

HE went on to tell her that on the three disks were carved the directions for finding a treasure buried by the Emperor Wan Li in the sixteenth century, near the city of Kung-Chang, little more than a hundred miles over the border of Burma. She suggested at once that, with the disk he had and the disk she had and the surface exposed of the disk in Earl Street, he had five-sixths of the directions and ought to be able to puzzle out the other sixth. He said that even if they did puzzle out the directions they would be no use—unless, as the Chinamen evidently feared by their refusal to let the disks be handled, the treasure hunters came with an army. But the priests of a temple of Kuan Yin, the guardians of the treasure whose hiding-place they did not know, would allow anyone who not only knew it, but brought the three disks, to dig it up and take it away, and would give him a safe conduct that would take him through all Asia.

"It's a legendary treasure, the treasure of the Emperor, and the man who brings the three disks is considered the heir. I don't quite understand it," he explained. "But how did you get hold of one of the disks?"

She told him the story of her attempt to get the painted jade for Mr. Pulchriter.

"You're rather a wonder," he said, in admiring accents. "And you certainly must come into this business with me. You were destined to come into it."

"There doesn't seem much chance of my getting a hundred pounds for getting Mr. Pulchriter the two disks," she said, ruefully.

"A hundred? There's more than a hundred in it if you help me to get hold of that treasure. And you'll do it. The luck is evidently with you," he said, quickly and confidently.

"I must think about it," she said, hesitating.

"Anyhow, I'll give you two hundred for the disk in the post. I can't run to more at present. I'm husbanding my resources to get the treasure," he said.

"I'm not going to be paid for handing over to you your own property which was stolen," said Jenny, with immense decision.

He tried to persuade her that it was only fair that she should be rewarded. He failed.

This decision brought them to lunch-time, and since the disk from Tidal Basin would not reach Melina Place before half-past seven and nothing was to be done till then, he invited her to lunch with him at the Trocadero. Jenny, as a rule, knew what she wanted, and it was her habit to do what she wanted without wasting time. She wanted to lunch with him to learn more about him and the painted jade; she accepted the invitation. At lunch she learnt more about him; his name was Timothy Bond, and, like herself, he was an orphan with only distant relations; his family had been in the China trade ever since there was a China trade; he had gone into his father's business, but his father had lost the bulk of his money in unlucky speculations and had to sell the business and died; Timothy had saved from the wreck eighteen hundred pounds and his father's house in King Henry's Road.

He was going to devote that eighteen hundred pounds to getting the treasure his uncle had left him. If he failed he would return to the China trade. She liked his keenness and alertness and his boyish eagerness; she found him intelligent and amusing, and she was sure that he would not easily be turned back from his attempt on the treasure; also she had a pleasing feeling that he needed someone to look after him. He liked her, her spirit and humour and quickness in the "uptake," her obvious essential womanliness, no less than she liked him; he too had a pleasing feeling that she needed someone to look after her. Also he was unable any longer to perceive that her mouth was too large or her nose too short for her face.

They lingered over lunch till half-past three; then it seemed natural to stroll to the Regent Palace Hotel—she would not hear of a more expensive *thé dansant*—to dance. A hard-faced young man and woman followed them; later they followed them to Melina Place, whither the postman brought the disk from the Tidal Basin at half past seven. Timothy Bond received it with joyful gratitude. Feeling that he had seen enough of her for one day, Jenny refused his invitation to dinner. The hard-faced pair followed him to his club and later to the house in King Henry's Road.

In Tidal Basin all that day and far into the night not only were the police searching for the hatchet-faced man who had stolen the gold disk, but, without their knowing it, a dozen well-paid amateurs searched for him too. It was not till the afternoon of the fourth day that one of the amateurs found him in far-away Lambeth, and late that night five amateurs brought him to the curio shop. An hour later he hobbled out of it a sadder and a sorer man. Fortunately he had satisfied the astute Chinaman that he had slipped the disk into Jenny's pocket.

During those four days Jenny and Timothy held long conferences, attended, always at a distance, by the hard-faced pair, in their search for a method of obtaining the disk in the shop in Earl Street. They held them at the Florence and the Regent Palace Hotel, and often they danced as they conferred. They did not find the method, but they were incurring grave danger of losing their interest in the disk in their growing interest in one another.

At a few minutes to twelve on the night of the fifth day Jenny arrived home to find Mrs. Trinder, her landlady, locked in the kitchen. She let the good woman out, exhausted by hours of fury and fear of the loss of cherished belongings. She poured out an odd story; how the bell had rung and she had gone to the door in the wall of the garden and found two beautifully-dressed yellow gentlemen on its threshold. On the instant they had seized her and bundled her across the garden, one of them holding his hand firmly over her mouth, through the house, into the kitchen, and locked her in. She had tried to bite the hand that gagged her—in vain.

At once Jenny hurried her off to the nearest policeman and brought him back with her to search the house. No one was in it; the belongings of Mrs. Trinder were untouched; not an antimacassar had gone; but Jenny's rooms had been carefully and thoroughly searched; everything had been put back in its place, but not quite in its place. Plainly the hatchet-faced man had told the Chinaman how he had hidden the disk from the police, and they were on the track of it.

The policeman went.

Mrs. Trinder, plaintive after gin-and-water, went to bed. Jenny also went to bed, but she lay awake, reproaching herself for not having been careful to look out for shadows and evade them, cudgelling her brains for a method of repairing her carelessness. She could find none; there was trouble ahead and plenty of it; it had become much more difficult to obtain the third disk.

The next morning, fearing that her handbag would be stolen, she took from it the jade disk which she had painted herself. She was still carrying it, partly because it had all the luck carved on it and she needed it, partly because she had a feeling that it would again come in useful. She made a small bag that would just hold it and sewed it on to her garter and slipped the disk into it.

She found Timothy waiting for her at Stewart's, and when she told him of this

new incident, his face, which had been very bright at the sight of her, fell; he whistled softly and said: "Pretty hot stuff—these yellow gentlemen! We've got to look out, though we are in London and not in China."

"We have," said Jenny. "And I don't think our being in London makes much difference."

For the rest of the day, keeping an eye out for shadows, they conferred in pleasant places, sometimes dancing, sometimes not. They conferred on other things besides the disk: on their views on life, their tastes, things they had done, things they wished to do, how one would spend a fortune if one found treasure. It was past twelve when they walked cautiously down Melina Place.

At the last house at the bottom of that cul-de-sac a large car was standing; its hunched-up chauffeur appeared to be drowsing. Jenny opened the door in the wall and looked round the garden. It was empty. They went through the door, up the path.

On the instant the garden, that had looked empty, seemed full of yellow men. They had been hidden behind the shrubs. Two of them seized Jenny and held her helpless, one of them keeping a hand firmly over her mouth; two gripped Timothy's arms; a third deftly scragged him before he could yell; a fourth forced his mouth open and thrust a handkerchief into it. Timothy was a strong young man; he kicked them and stamped on their feet and dragged them about. But they soon had him down and bound. Then they lifted him into the car, which had moved up to the garden door, pushed Jenny into it, and crowded into it after her. It started.

It had been a brisk tussle, though it had lasted little longer than a minute, and the tusslers were all breathing fast and loudly. Jenny, who found herself squashed against Timothy, felt for his bound hands and squeezed his fingers sympathetically. A voice said that if they gave no more trouble, no harm would befall them. Jenny recognized it as that of the young Chinaman of the Earl Street Oriental shop.

The car went quickly; presently it was in the City Road. It ran through the City, along the East India Dock Road, along some small streets on the right of it, and came to a stop before a tall old house in one of them. One of the Chinamen loosed the cords that bound Timothy's ankles, so that he could hobble, but not kick; they were marched into the house, up the stairs, and into a large bare room on the second floor. It was lighted by electric light and very hot and stuffy; indeed, the stove at the end of it seemed nearly red-hot.

At a table facing the door sat the two fat Chinamen who had been in the rooms behind the shops in Tidal Basin and Earl Street, and between them sat an old, old Chinaman, incredibly shrunken—Jenny had never seen so old a man—the skin of his face wrinkled into scores of folds. They looked like a tribunal.

Jenny and Timothy came to a stand in front of the table; the young Chinaman stood a pace to the left of them; the rest of the kidnappers ranged themselves behind them.

The young Chinaman said a few words in Chinese; the fat Chinaman on the left answered him.

The young Chinaman turned to Jenny and said: "We want the painted disk the thief put in your pocket in the shop in Tidal Basin. You did not bring it back to us, so it was evidently no use asking you for it, and have brought you here. Where is it? We mean to have it."

"It isn't yours to have. You stole it. I sha'n't tell you anything about it," said Jenny, firmly.

"You will tell us, or your obstinacy will be the measure of your pain. The stove is very hot," he said, quietly. "And you will gain nothing. Under the window the Thames is flowing to the sea; you will go with it—both of you. The water is very cold."

From his tone it was no bluff; but Jenny was very, very angry. Some obscure race instinct, surging up in her, bade her fight these yellow brutes to the last.

In spite of the gagged Timothy's frantic nodding to her to tell the Chinaman where the disk was, she said, fiercely: "You're talking nonsense! You daren't do anything of the kind. I *won't* tell you!"

The young Chinaman gripped her left arm and held her still and said a few words in Chinese to the kidnappers behind them. Four of them gripped Timothy; a fifth pulled off his left shoe. They lifted him off his feet and carried him towards the stove. Jenny had not expected this: it was more than she could stand. The unshod foot was within six inches of the stove and she was on the very point of telling them that the disk was in Timothy's bank when an idea flashed on her.

"Stop!" she cried. "The disk is here."

They stopped. She shook off the young Chinaman's grip, bent down, slipped her own disk out of its bag, and held it up for them to see.

In the tense silence there came the sound of two or three sighs of satisfaction.

"And now it's there!" she said, and threw it hard and straight through the window.

On the instant the garden, that had looked empty, seemed full of yellow men.

She thought she heard faintly its splash in the river; she certainly heard three or four grunts of dismay.

The old, old Chinaman rose to his feet with a shrill, quavering cry, half turned towards the window, collapsed, and fell sideways across the table.

The two fat Chinamen bent over him; the young Chinaman sprang to him; the kidnappers dropped Timothy; two of them scuttled to the window; three of them scuttled to the table: Jenny went to Timothy, drew the handkerchief out of his mouth, raised him into a sitting posture, then pulled on his shoe.

The wits of the Chinamen seemed to be at sixes and sevens; their Oriental impassiveness had wholly gone. They were all talking together, dancing like peas in a frying-pan from the window to the table, from the table to the window. Never was there a plainer case of the helplessness of a crowd without a leader. They had forgotten Jenny and Timothy. It was absurdly like a children's game which, having ended in disaster, is forgotten.

Then, leaving the dead man on the table, they went to the window in a body, disputing louder than ever—all of them except the young Chinaman. He came to Jenny and Timothy, opening a pen-knife as he came. Jenny sprang in front of Timothy to protect him.

But the young Chinaman said, shrilly: "I cut the ropes. The disk is lost. Only the Prince knew why we tried to get it. He will pay no more money to risk hanging for." He grew calmer and added: "I would rather you went without bother. This is an unexpected and deplorable ending."

Speaking, he cut Timothy's bonds and dragged him to his feet. He had unlocked the door and slipped the key into the other side of it when one of the Chinamen at the window saw them and cried out. But they had bustled through the door, and the young Chinaman had locked it before the others could reach it. They raced down the stairs, through the hall, and into the street.

The Chinaman said: "The East India Dock Road," pointed to the left, turned to the right.

"Stop!" cried Jenny. "What about that disk in the shop in Earl Street? It's of no use to you now. I'll give you a hundred pounds for it."

The Chinaman turned and snapped: "We find a taxi."

They raced up the street, Timothy pulling Jenny along into the East India Dock Road. A hundred yards down it they found a crawling taxi; it brought them to the shop in Earl Street. The young Chinaman gave Jenny the disk, took Timothy's cheque for a hundred pounds, picked up a soapstone figure, modern, of Tung Fang So, and ushered them into the empty street. He looked this way and that, then with the soapstone figure of the holy man he smashed the bottom of the plate-glass window, and went south quickly.

JENNY and Timothy went north quickly. They walked briskly along Piccadilly to the all-night Brasserie at the Criterion, sat down at a table and ordered chocolate. Then, with a deep breath, both of them relaxed and looked at one another. She saw that his eyes were shining with immense admiration—and something more. Hers fell before them.

"A genius—a genius!" he said, softly.

"Thank goodness we got out of that hole!" she said, quickly.

"Thank goodness you got me out of that hole," he said, gravely. "And thanks ever so many times for getting me the third disk. Now all we've got to do is to go and claim the treasure."

"We?" said Jenny, quickly. "How can I go?"

"Well, it's quite certain that unless you go with me I shall never get the treasure; so you absolutely must come," he said.

"But how can I?" Jenny repeated.

"There's a way," he said, looking at her with eyes that were shining more brightly than ever. "It's a quite simple way. All we've got to do is to get married, and you can go anywhere with me."

"Oh!" said Jenny.

"Won't you?" he said, bending over the table towards her.

His eyes implored and demanded.

"Well, I—I—might consider it," she said, and just glanced at him.

He saw, or thought that he saw, something in her eyes that made him believe that her consideration would be favourable.

THIS ASTOUNDING CASE IS FACT—NOT FICTION.

CASES FROM MY CRIME-BOOK

THE "EYE OF THE POLICE."
Badge of Parisian Detectives.

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. XIV. THE MAN WHO BRED CATS.

"STRANGE how certain crimes run in series," said Monsieur Bertillon to me, musingly. "Almost as though a species of telepathy, or even some intangible evil influence outside our material world, acts simultaneously on degenerate or abnormal brains. I seem to visualize a swarm of crime germs floating in the atmosphere and swooping down from time to time to settle in receptive, fertile soil. I wonder if some day we shall discover that crime is a disease due to a microbe?"

"A form of madness, caused by unknown streptococci?" I queried, smiling.

"Exactly. It sounds fantastic—but who knows? Among the Malays we will suppose, for instance, that this microbe produces enough toxine to cause infected individuals to run amuck and kill wholesale, whereas in the white it merely upsets his mental balance and drives him to cunning murders. After all, we know that certain drugs, such as absinthe and hashish, will bring on acute homicidal mania. Hence the word assassin, derived from hashishin. But this is foolish theorizing. What causes me to speculate about crimes in series is that within the last month we have had two callous murders and three simulated accidents; all with the object of defrauding insurance companies or of anticipating the day when the criminals would normally have inherited money and property assigned to them in a will.

BLACK MAGIC.

"THAT clever little Monsieur Tiérce, who acts as private investigator for the big insurance companies, was here this morning. It appears that a man named Sven Larsen, who was well known as a salvage expert, has just died mysteriously. His life was insured for a large sum, half of which goes to his brother, Jarg Larsen, the remainder to his wife Jeanne. Tiérce believes that the man was poisoned; but I have spoken to the doctor who attended him, and he tells me that Sven Larsen died of tetanus, probably caused by a cut in his foot. I can understand that the insurance

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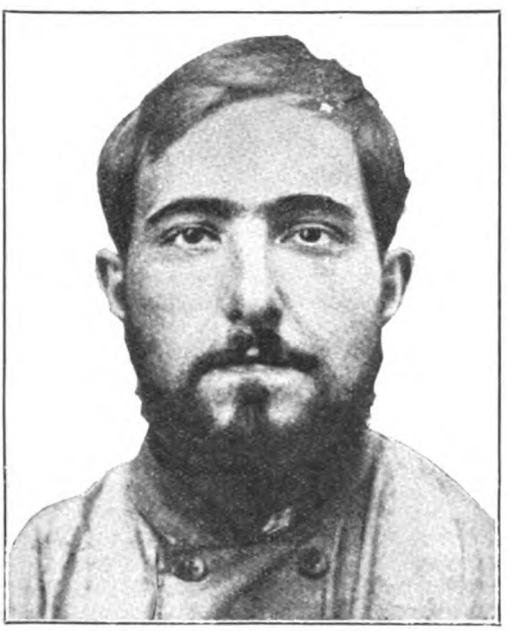
people don't want to pay, but if it was tetanus, then there has been no foul play. Maître Hoffmayer, the famous criminal lawyer, has telephoned and will be here shortly. Madame Larsen, who is a Frenchwoman, was formerly his confidential secretary. After she married, the lawyer constantly visited the couple and became the husband's intimate friend. I imagine he was just a wee bit in love with the girl. He tried to tell me some fantastic story of black magic and sorcery——"

"Sorcery?" I ejaculated, in surprise.

"Yes, so it seems," Bertillon resumed. "I have some information here about the brother, Jarg Larsen"—and my chief consulted a document. "Jarg is a mysterious gloomy giant, silent and mystical, like so many Scandinavians. He was for many years a doctor on his brother's ship; Sven Larsen commanded a whaler in the South Seas. When he married and settled down in Bicêtre, Jarg went to live with the couple. He became a house surgeon under Dr. Deroular at the Lariboisière hospital, but left suddenly because of some scandal. Since then, it appears, he has been carrying on research work in a small house he built on his brother's land. He is also—my report states—an authority on mediæval alchemy and Egyptian magic—ah!"



Jarg Larsen—the Murderer.

Monsieur Bertillon ceased as a hurried knock sounded on the door. In reply to his curt "Come in!" a tall bearded man in the flowing toga of the French barrister bustled in, a bulky leather brief-case under his arm.

"Good morning, Maître," Bertillon exclaimed, rising with a smile. "We were just discussing this farrago of tetanus and black magic. I presume you have called about that?"

"I have, Monsieur Bertillon. It may have sounded a farrago, as you say, over the telephone, but I assure you that the death of my friend Larsen aroused a feeling of horror in me. I sense a foul crime. Whether I can persuade you to investigate or not is another matter."

"Has Madame Larsen definitely accused anyone, then? Has she instructed you to inform the Sûreté?"

"No; I have advised her to wait. That is why I have called——"

Monsieur Bertillon waved his hand to a chair.

"Let's have the facts. Without prejudice—I think that is the phrase among lawyers, eh?"

THE DOUBLE INSURANCE.

BUT the barrister did not smile at my chief's jocular manner. He threw back his silken gown, settled himself comfortably, and drew a sheaf of papers from the leather case. "First and foremost, then, there is this. Some years ago the two brothers, Jarg and Sven, who were almost the same age and inseparable, both insured their lives for a large sum of money—each making the amount payable to the other. As you no doubt know, they are Frenchmen by birth, although of Scandinavian parents. They chose a French company. Then, when Sven married my secretary, Jeanne Bigoud, they each increased the amount of the insurance—half to go to the surviving brother, the other half to Madame Larsen. The idea from the start was Jarg's."

"I see. How did Sven come to marry your secretary?"

"I was counsel in several salvage cases, and they first became acquainted in my office."

Bertillon nodded and made several notes.

"They settled down in Bicêtre," the lawyer resumed, "and I became a constant visitor at their house. But I never liked Jarg. He is a gloomy, taciturn fellow, with the muscles of a giant and the temper of a fiend. He is obsessed with the belief that he is the descendant or reincarnation of an Egyptian priest from Bubastis. His bungalow is a veritable sorcerer's den. Stuffed

crocodiles and owls everywhere. He keeps a dozen large Persian and Siamese cats, who are his only companions, and he dabbles in black magic, incantations, hypnotism, and the like. He lost his post at the hospital because he preferred magic formulas to medical science. I have heard that several patients who died had circles, pentacles, and other cabalistic signs traced on their foreheads."

"I shall inquire into the truth of that," my chief interrupted. "I take it you are merely repeating gossip?"

"More than that," the lawyer returned, indignantly. "I questioned several nurses who confirmed the tale. Well, since then Jarg Larsen has gone from bad to worse. All his money goes to pay for mysterious experiments, and he constantly borrowed from his brother."

"Do you know what his researches are?" Bertillon asked.

"No one knows, but they have something to do with the human soul and its transference into the bodies of animals. Madame Larsen thinks that he uses his cats——"

"Have done, Maitre!" Bertillon interrupted. "You are a busy man and so am I. Stick to facts."

"It is a fact that he believes in sorcery, anyway," the lawyer replied, flushing; "for he has spoken about it to me. It is the only thing he *will* speak about.

"Then, a year ago, Madame Larsen persuaded her cousin Bianca to live with her as companion, because Captain Larsen was often absent for months on salvage work. Bianca is a tall, extraordinarily dark, reserved girl, with such a far-away, dreamy expression in her eyes that it always made me feel uneasy. Her mother was a Russian, and Bianca is as queer as Jarg. Soon after her arrival she began to help him in his laboratory. I fancy she is in love with him. It was from something Bianca let slip that Madame Larsen first obtained an inkling of the true nature of Jarg's studies. It frightened her very much, for she is a devout Roman Catholic, and so was her husband. They both began to watch Jarg and Bianca closely.

HYPNOTISM.

"THEN, it appears, he suggested one day that Madame Larsen should let herself be hypnotized, thus bringing matters to a head. There was a terrible scene between the brothers, during which Jarg said such horrible things that the next morning Sven came to consult me as to the advisability of getting an alienist to examine his brother, for he believed him to be insane. He also discussed a new will and the possible reassignment of his insurance policy, in order to leave everything entirely to his wife. I gave him the address of a notary who would do this. That was a week ago. Yesterday I received an urgent call from Madame Larsen. I drove to Bicêtre at once and found my friend unconscious. He died shortly after."

"Did he make a fresh will and reassign the policy?" Bertillon asked, sharply.

"No. He made an appointment with the notary, but did not keep it."

"Do you think this—necromancer"—and my chief's lips curled sarcastically—"knew of his intention?"

"Certainly. I know the insurance company wrote in reply to an inquiry over the 'phone, informing their client that the brother's signature would be needed for a reassignment. I imagine Sven must have mentioned it to Jarg."

"And who benefits by the existing will?"

"I do not know. I believe the wife does."

"So if, as you suggest, Jarg murdered his brother, the only motive was the desire to prevent him from making the half share of the insurance payable to the wife?"

"There is something else," the lawyer admitted, shifting uneasily. "Madame Larsen confided to me that Jarg persecuted her with coarse attentions when her husband was away. It was this which decided her to take Bianca as a companion. After the scene, she warned Jarg that she would tell her husband about it."

Bertillon gazed steadily at the barrister for several moments, then he asked slowly: "And have you nothing to add? Is that all?"

Maître Hoffmayer rose at the words, his face pale.

"Yes, I have always loved little Jeanne and, until Sven Larsen stepped in, had hoped to marry her. I still love her, and now that she is alone I shall make it my business to protect her—as husband, if she'll have me. But there has never been——"

"You need not continue, Maître. I know that; and your frankness disarms me. I can feel for you. But I can promise you nothing, except that we will watch and investigate. If Larsen died of tetanus, then that ends the matter. Telephone to Madame Larsen and tell her I shall call this afternoon. I should like it managed so that the doctor who attended the husband will be there. Above all, she must keep the necromancer away somehow. I take it the body has not been moved yet?"

"No, nothing has been touched."

BERTILLON SUSPECTS.

WHEN the lawyer had gone, Monsieur Bertillon sat with bowed head, a brooding expression on his face, for long moments. At last he looked up, and there was horror in his eyes.

"I wonder," he said. "Tetanus? What a fearful thing to contemplate, and almost impossible to prove." Suddenly his fist thumped the table. "By Heaven, that lawyer may be right in believing that Larsen was murdered. His brother was assistant surgeon at the Lariboisière hospital, where they have a number of tetanus cases."

"Also he lives at Bicêtre," I suggested, hesitatingly.

Monsieur Bertillon gazed at me in surprise.

"What of it?"

"Bicêtre is a former battlefield and was a burial-ground during the Revolution. The soil there is 'tetaniferous.' I mean, impregnated——" I stopped, alarmed at the look on my chief's face. It was but a gleam—in an instant a mask of indifference had wiped out the tense expression. He smiled slowly.

"That is a good shot you made. I'd forgotten. Since your interest is so keenly aroused, you had better come with me this afternoon. Send Rousseau to me now."

A telephone message summoned me from my microscopes shortly after lunch. I found Monsieur Bertillon waiting at the door of the Sûreté headquarters with a closed car and Rousseau already installed beside the driver. We were soon at Bicêtre, an outflung arm of suburban Paris. A number of large oak trees formed a leafy screen before the house of the Larsens, which stood in extensive grounds surrounded by a hedge of hawthorns interlaced with vines. Some distance behind the main building stood a long squat bungalow painted red, the dwelling and laboratory the lawyer had mentioned, in which Jarg Larsen lived with his cats and experimented in ancient sorceries.

Madame Larsen, who was murdered by her brother-in-law, Jarg.

Evidently Madame Larsen had been anxiously watching for our arrival, for as we came up the path she stepped from the house and stood for a moment irresolute, convulsively clasping and unclasping her hands, a terribly tragic and lonely figure. She was already dressed in black, and her golden hair drooped in heavy coils from under a wisp of black veil. Her eyes were swollen with weeping, and the nerves of her face twitched as I have seen them do in the faces of men listening to sentence of death. Abruptly, at the sound of a door slamming somewhere in the house, she cringed and raised one arm as though expecting a blow. Monsieur Bertillon stepped quickly forward and seized her hands, murmuring low words of consolation and sympathy.

"We have come, Madame," he said, "at the request of your good friend, Maître Hoffmayer, and will do all in our power to help you. Is there no one here with you?"

"Yes, yes, there is a *religieuse* from the convent of the Sacred Heart, in the bedroom where my poor husband is lying——" and she gulped miserably, tears again starting from her eyes. "There is also the doctor, who is waiting for you."

"Then perhaps you will let us go to him first? Afterwards, if you are strong enough, I should like to put some questions to you. Where is your cousin, Mademoiselle Bianca, by the way?"

"In her room. The lawyer said you wished to see me alone."

"Quite right. And your brother-in-law?"

"He is up there in his bungalow. I told him that some relations of mine were coming. I'll wait here for you, if I may. I can watch

and warn you, should he come out. He—he is very violent."

"Remain here with Madame," Bertillon said briskly to Rousseau; "and call if you see the fellow."

THE WOUND IN THE FOOT.

THE bedroom where the body was lying was on the second floor and overlooked the front of the park. It was a large room with one big French window.

"Be careful where you step," my chief said to me, "although unfortunately foot or finger-prints are of no use to us here. All the usual indications must fail, since there has been no violence and the fellow Jarg is a member of the household."

The doctor, who had seen us enter, quickly gave Bertillon an outline of the case.

"I was called at dawn yesterday," he related. "My patient was already then in a state of coma. The jaws were locked in the characteristic rictus of tetanus—the body bent like a bow and resting only on the heels and head. I did all I could, but it was hopeless from the first. I have found nothing to lead me to believe that poison or anything else was used. There is a deep cut in the left foot near the little toe. That is where the *bacillus* entered the nervous system."

Monsieur Bertillon walked to the body and drew down the sheet; then he examined the foot.

"Was the cut bandaged, doctor? I see it is very deep."

"No, it was as you see it."

"What, no bandage? Then it must have bled freely. Give me the dead man's shoes and socks," he continued, turning to me.

Bertillon scrutinized the left sock and the shoe for a long time, handing them back to me without a word. Then he walked to the dressing-table and picked up a razor case. "Take this," he said, "but be careful how you handle it. There should be some indications there."

He continued to examine the room carefully, but his eyes came back again and again to the body. At last, with a shrug of the shoulders he exclaimed: "According to you, doctor, how long had the disease been acutely active?"

"Probably twenty-four hours; that is the usual duration, although in some cases it kills sooner."

"And how old should you say that cut was? You see, it is quite clean and open, nor is there any sign of its having begun to heal." The doctor looked startled, and examined the cut again. His face was grave as he looked up.

"You are right—it might have been inflicted only a few hours ago. But, then, that's impossible—the man was already dead. What do you imagine——?"

"I imagine nothing, doctor. It is for you to answer my question. Still, it's not important. Obviously, as you say, the man died of tetanus."

AN EAVESDROPPER.

I LOOKED up, surprised at the indifferent manner in which Monsieur Bertillon spoke, and saw a curious intent look on his face. At the same instant a door closed quietly somewhere not far away. My chief relaxed his tense pose and smiled grimly. Then he beckoned to me, and together we descended to where Madame Larsen was still waiting.

"Where is your cousin's room?" he whispered, excitedly. "On the same floor—at the back? Thank you." And without another word he ran quickly across the grounds to the hedge and crept along until he was hidden by the house. Ten minutes passed before he reappeared, breathing quickly.

"Does your cousin often light her lamp in the daytime?" was his strange question, as he approached.

"No—why should she?" Madame Larsen replied.

"But she has done so now. Can it be seen from the bungalow as a signal, for instance?"

The woman shivered, but instead of answering looked searchingly into my chief's eyes. A spot of angry red showed on her cheeks and she stepped forward eagerly; her trembling hand rested for an instant on Bertillon's arm.

"You have discovered something, then?"

"No, madame, nothing—as yet. Now tell me. Was your husband in the habit of cutting his corns with a razor?"

"I cannot tell you, sir. It must be so, since the doctor says that he cut his foot deeply."

"He was not by chance left-handed?"

"Oh, no—but he could use both hands well. He mentioned it often, and said it was a useful gift for a sailor. His brother is the same."

"Did you throw away a bandage he had tied around the wound?"

The woman shook her head slowly.

"Thank you. Just one other question. Where is the will your husband made?"

"I have it in my bureau. My husband left everything to me, but there are some clauses which concern Jarg. He is taking it to the notary."

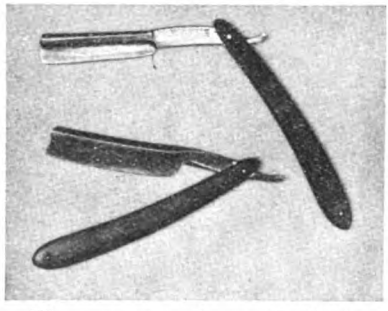
"Thank you. Now I should like to speak to Mademoiselle Bianca, and afterwards I will interview your brother-in-law."

When the woman had entered the house

Bertillon turned to me and said rapidly: "Return to the Sûreté at once. I want you to examine those razors—quickly—the girl must not see you. You, Rousseau, will spend a few hours among the neighbours and report to-morrow morning."

WHAT THE MICROSCOPE REVEALED.

WE hurried away at once, Rousseau to the nearest inn, whilst I hailed a taxi and drove back to the Quai des Orfèvres. The case which I had taken contained two hollow-ground ordinary razors. Both handles showed finger-prints, but I perceived with a thrill that they were not the same. The edge of one razor was slightly blood-stained, and under the microscope I saw that the blood was fresh.



The razors found near the body of Sven Larsen. The upper had the finger-prints of Jarg Larsen on it.

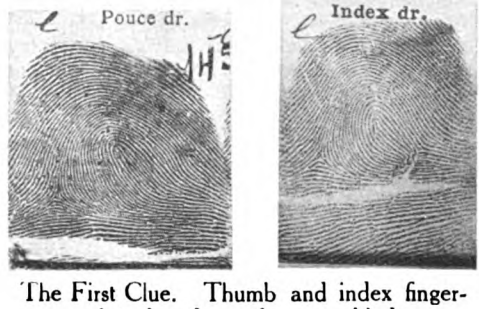
The next morning Bertillon came to my office and examined my work. After comparing the finger-prints with some which he had brought on a card, and which I guessed were those of the dead man, he said grimly:—

"Those on the blood-stained razor are not the dead man's; and there is the mark of a thumb and index finger on the blade, eh? Yes, I thought so. I imagine Jarg left those when he opened the razor. A terrible man—he threatened to kick me out until I showed him how unwise that would be, since I had only come to ask a few questions. A queer place that bungalow, although I saw little of it. He stood in the doorway and talked to me. I also spoke to Bianca. That girl is only apparently cold and reserved. She's white hot inside, and, I begin to believe, as mad as the brother."

"What did that cut tell you?" I asked, breathlessly.

"You saw what I saw. Only a left-handed man could cut himself in that way. I thought I had something there, until Madame Larsen spoiled it by saying that both brothers were ambidextrous. So nothing remains except that the cut did not cause tetanus and was probably made when the man was unconscious or dead. The sock and shoe should have been blood-stained if he walked about without a bandage; the wound had not even started to heal. I believe it was made after death by Jarg, and those finger-prints on the razor confirm that theory. That means the *bacillus* entered somewhere else and Jarg cut his brother's foot, so that the doctor should not seek elsewhere. But it doesn't help us. We must obtain conclusive evidence before we can act. From what Rousseau reported, this Jarg is a deep one, and an ardent admirer of the fair sex. He has had several quarrels over women in the neighbourhood. Thank Heaven for that! A woman will trip him up as usual.

"Now, I want you to go to Bicêtre this afternoon, to call on Madame Larsen as a friend of her late husband. It's all arranged. Beware of listeners. I believe that girl Bianca is Jarg's spy, and that she signalled 'All's well' by lighting her lamp yesterday. I caught a glimpse of binoculars on the fellow's table as he opened the door. They have probably a semaphore code. Don't stay too long, but find out if the girl is in constant touch with Jarg. Here is a key of the gate. Rousseau will join you at dusk. If by good luck the man should go out, let him be followed; two plain-clothes men are on duty not far away. You must then try to enter his bungalow and search it. I am not telling you to break in, that would be illegal. But perhaps Rousseau may find the door open"—and Bertillon smiled suddenly; so did I. I knew the old Brigadier always carried instruments which opened most doors.



The First Clue. Thumb and index finger-prints found on the razor-blade.

"Whatever you do," Bertillon cautioned me, "don't be caught in there. It would spoil every chance of getting evidence."

A WATCH ON LARSEN.

MY call on Madame Larsen made it very evident that Bianca was keenly on the watch, for when I suddenly opened the door I heard a patter of footsteps on

the stairs and caught a glimpse of a tall, dark girl disappearing into a room on the first landing. As I left I perceived two men apparently busy outside the gate with tape and surveyor's stick. They were the detectives from headquarters.

"Tell Rousseau I shall wait at the wineshop opposite the tram stop," I said in passing, "and let me know the moment Larsen goes out."

Just at sunset the Brigadier joined me and we settled down near the door. One of the detectives had been instructed to follow Larsen if he went out, whilst the other was to signal to us outside the inn by lighting a cigarette. He would then take our place, and his colleague would telephone to warn him the moment Larsen turned back. It was only a short distance from the inn to the Larsen house, and we should hear a whistle from the road distinctly.

Bianca, Madame Larsen's cousin.

It was almost ten when at last we saw a match flare up under the shelter, just as an electric tram came to a halt. Rousseau at once shambled out whilst I paid the bill. We gained the grounds without trouble.

"He's taken a tram to Paris," the Brigadier informed me. "Dressed as for an evening out. I hope he doesn't suddenly change his mind."

Inside the grounds it was pitch-dark and we had to feel our way carefully, for it would have been dangerous to use our lamps. At last the bungalow loomed up before us, and Rousseau at once set to work on the door, whilst I gave him occasional gleams of light near the lock to guide him. It seemed a long time to me before a sharp click and a grunt of satisfaction from my friend told me that he had succeeded in opening the door. We carefully wiped our feet on a cloth brought for that purpose, and entered.

"I think we can risk a light," Rousseau whispered. "There are heavy shutters outside and thick blinds and curtains before the windows. I'll throw my overcoat along the bottom of the door. Go and see whether the light shows."

I did so; but beyond a faint grey haze which did not carry far nothing could be seen.

It was indeed a strange place we were in. Maître Hoffmayer had not exaggerated when he called Larsen a sorcerer and alchemist. The whole front of the bungalow was one long room, evidently Jarg Larsen's study and laboratory. In a weird array around the walls stood stuffed owls, mummified cats, and reptiles. A great Nile crocodile, with gaping jaws, swung from the rafters; whilst the centre of the floor was occupied by a huge sphere of brass, engraved with the signs of the Zodiac, and encircled by movable metal rings. Under the windows, from door to wall, ran a bench littered with crucibles, retorts, and Bunsen burners; and against the opposite wall I perceived a modern electric furnace. The books which lay scattered about were as strange as the rest.

Medical treatises and works on chemistry, jumbled pell-mell with ancient tomes of occultism and magic, filled many shelves. Beside the brass astrologer's globe stood a table bearing a large, beautifully translucid crystal on a velvet cloth, and beside it lay a roll of papyrus covered with hieroglyphics. It was a queer mixture of modern science and mediæval superstition. I examined some of the books. They were German or Swedish. One was Starnberg's "Transmutation of Base Metals"; another dealt with reincarnation and the teachings of Buddha. There was nothing here to help us in our investigation, and I was about to say so when my heart contracted with fear. Rousseau had turned the handle of a door leading to a back room, but as it opened he sprang back with a yell of terror. From the dark gap came a scratching and pattering of feet and I saw a cluster of gleaming phosphorescent eyes. I stood frozen with horror for a second, then I remembered the cats; Bertillon had evidently not told Rousseau about them. He laughed with relief when I explained.

"Cats!" he exclaimed. "For a moment I thought they were devils."

THE DISINFECTED CLAWS.

THERE were a dozen or so large sleek cats shut in behind a wire screen, which divided the room in half. Beautiful animals: tabbies, blue Persians, and several tawny specimens from Siam. They purred with delight at our appearance. I saw there was a wire door leading into the cage, which I opened. One great fellow came rubbing himself contentedly against my legs, and I picked him up.

"Whatever the man's faults," I remarked to my companion, "he cares for his pets. Look at their splendid condition. He must spend his time brushing and combing them."

"Yes," Rousseau agreed, "but look at the size of their claws."

The animal I held was pushing his velvety paws against me, opening and retracting them contentedly.

"Just a minute, Brigadier," I cried. "Hold him, will you? I want to look at these claws. Strange," I added—"smell them! They have been steeped in carbolic."

"Carbolic, by Jove! So they have!" Rousseau agreed, sniffing at the paws. "Try some of the others."

We picked them up one by one, but only three—two tabbies and a black and white—smelled of disinfectant.

"Now, I wonder," Rousseau muttered. "Some of his experiments, I expect. Better put them back; we may have to run for it at any time."

The upper half of the cage was taken up by a sleeping loft for the animals, which they gained by climbing little ladders. This was a vast box with a lid at the top, and was lined with straw.

The remainder of the room was a sort of bedroom with a low, comfortable divan across one end. We returned to the laboratory and gazed around in despair. It would take days to search it systematically.

"We had better go now," Rousseau suggested. I was about to assent when a beautiful microscope near the lamp attracted my attention.

"Wait a minute," I called, settling myself and adjusting the eyepiece. "There is a slide in it. Let's see what he works at."

I set the mirrors and focused quickly. For a moment my sight was blurred; then a tingling shock ran through me.

"Good Lord!" I yelled, nearly upsetting the instrument as I started up. "Do you know what is in that slide? Tetanus *bacilli!*"

Rousseau stared incredulously, but before he could reply a fumbling sound at the door set our hearts pounding. A key grated in the lock, and Rousseau snatched up his coat, switched off the lamp, and dragged me into the back room, shutting the door.

"Into the cats' loft quickly," he whispered, pulling open the wire door. "It's our only chance. The pussies won't hurt us, but mind you don't tread on them."

As noiselessly as possible we lifted the lid and climbed in, stretching out on the straw. At once soft warm furry bodies came to investigate this strange intrusion, and a continuous purring vibrated in our ears. Someone had entered the laboratory, for a ray of light shot along the floor, and we heard gliding steps pacing to and fro, but they did not sound like a man's. Abruptly a whistle shrilled from the park, loud and insistent. It was the signal that Larsen was returning. Five minutes later came a heavy tread and a slam which shook the building. A deep growling voice said:—

"What the devil are you nosing around for, Bianca? Haven't I told you not to come here unless you see the light?"

"I thought I did see a light," a woman's voice, soft and refined, replied. "That is why I came. But you haven't kissed me, Jarg—nor told me where you've been."

THE HYPNOTIC TRANCE.

"STOP that nonsense!" Larsen exclaimed angrily. "I need you for other things. There is danger. I feel it around me ever since that dog of a lawyer called in the police. Sit down, Bianca. I want to read the future."

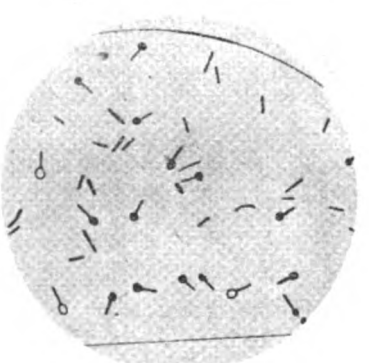
"Not to-night, Jarg, not to-night, I am not in the mood," Bianca pleaded.

"Sit down, I tell you. So! Now you are going to sleep—you are feeling sleepy—you are sleeping—ah!"

A drowsy voice said, "I am so cold, Jarg. I am out in a fog."

"Look nearer—at the house. What do you see?"

"Jeanne is crying beside her husband's



Micro-photograph of tetanus *bacilli* found near the bungalow and on the Chinese claw.

body. Now she rises and takes a paper from the bureau."

"Has she keys in her hands?"

"Yes—she has put the paper back in a drawer. The keys she puts in the pocket of her dressing gown. She is writing now——"

"Look closer. I will you to look——" and Larsen added some words in a strange tongue which I did not recognize.

"I cannot see clearly," the woman's voice wailed. "You are hurting me—it is about the paper she has just looked at—let me wake."

We heard the crash of an overturned chair, and then the sound of weeping. The man apparently cared little for this, for his heavy tread went pacing up and down for a long time.

"Go up to the house," Larsen suddenly ordered, "and watch if any letters are taken to be posted by the servant. You must get them somehow or we shall not be able to go away together. You still want that, don't you, Bianca?"

"More than my life, but I don't trust you any longer. You are yet fond of Jeanne." And there was sudden passion and anger in the woman's tone, which reminded me of Bertillon's words—"She is white-hot inside."

"Nonsense," Larsen countered; "that was before I saw you. There, give me a kiss now and do what I say."

We had been so interested in the strange scene between these two that we had quite forgotten our own predicament, which was serious enough. We were quite in the wrong, housebreakers in fact, and the fellow was a fierce, violent brute. My heart jumped as the door leading to the bedroom swung open and Larsen came in. But it was evident he suspected nothing. He merely glanced around, made a few friendly noises to his pets, and returned to his laboratory, leaving the door ajar. We heard him settle down to some mysterious work. A seething and crackling from the electric furnace and the smell of ozone penetrated to our hiding-place. For several hours the fellow was absorbed by some occult research which did not go to his liking, for he kept up a constant muttering and growling in a deep rumbling voice.

WE ESCAPE.

OUR limbs were cramped and aching, but we dared not move for fear of the noise the straw under us would make. At last, when the pain in my legs was becoming intolerable, he suddenly threw down a heavy volume with a crash and came back to the cage. To our horror he opened the door and called softly: "Flock, Jim, Goldie." The animals at once scrambled from the loft and we saw through the holes by which they had access to it that he had picked up the same three which I had seen in Mrs. Larsen's room that afternoon. A minute later the lamp was extinguished and the outer door slammed.

"Quick, now," Rousseau whispered. "He's gone. This is our chance. Rub your legs and try to follow."

Staggering painfully, we gained the grounds. The faint grey light of dawn already made trees and bushes dimly visible. Larsen was nowhere to be seen, but a soft whistle from the hedge warned us that the detectives, anxious for our safety, had watched and waited through the night. With their help we forced our way through a tangled opening. One of the men at once ran to obtain a car from the local gendarme station, and an hour later we were refreshing ourselves in the service room at headquarters.

Monsieur Bertillon listened gravely to my report, but he was evidently very disappointed.

"There is nothing, absolutely nothing," he said when I had concluded, "which would justify an arrest. I feel sure now that a crime has been committed, but what evidence have we? The tetanus slide in the microscope? Startling, yes—but he will say that, as a doctor, he was studying it because of his brother's death. They were only dead *bacilli*, anyhow, since, as you know, they die if exposed to the open air for long. The carbolic on the cats' claws is suggestive, but only to us. You say they were the same cats which Madame Larsen was fondling when you called. Yes, I see what you are driving at, but it's no good. We must wait, watch, and work slowly. I advised Madame Larsen to be as friendly as possible with her brother-in-law, and I purposely refrained from telling her that I suspected the cousin Bianca. After all, it may be only an amorous intrigue. We must try to weave the various threads together. I am going to consult Maître Hoffmayer and Monsieur Charpie, the *juge d'instruction*. I'll also get in touch with the insurance company and the notary. Now go and get some sleep. I'll send for you if there are any developments."

ANOTHER TETANUS CASE.

LATER in the day I saw my chief again. The insurance company had decided to abandon their attitude that a crime had been committed, and were willing to pay. The only information of any value was that Madame Larsen had telephoned to the notary and informed him that she wished to make a will and would call the next day to consult

"Now you are going to sleep—you are feeling sleepy—you are sleeping—ah!"

him. She had spoken of a letter she sent, but this letter the notary had not received. Another day passed whilst the Sûreté continued their inquiries. Then, on the following morning, just as I was settling down to ordinary routine work, a messenger summoned me hurriedly to Bertillon's office. The moment I entered I saw that something terrible had happened. Rousseau and Dufresne were standing talking in a corner, whilst my chief was bending over Maitre Hoffmayer, who sat, his head sunk on his hands, sobbing in utter abandon.

"Madame Larsen died this morning," Bertillon said sharply, looking up as I came in. "A doctor and a specialist attended her, and they are waiting for us. Tetanus again! Yes"—as I started at the unexpected news—"two of our men are guarding the house. We are going there at once. Bring all that is needed."

Without waiting for anything further I ran to collect a complete outfit. Plaster, gelatine, lenses, lamps, and a special camera. A powerful car drove us to Bicetre. The funeral of Sven Larsen had taken place on the day before, and the main entrance, according to French custom, was still draped in black. In the front room, where I had visited the unfortunate wife, we saw several cats asleep on a couch.

The body was in a bedroom which adjoined the one where Sven Larsen had died. Both the doctors were waiting and Bertillon made copious notes of their report. One was a local practitioner, and had been summoned just after dawn by Bianca, who implored him to come at once because her cousin was dying. She had insisted on the presence of a specialist, and he had telephoned at once to a colleague. The patient was unconscious when they arrived, and was obviously suffering from all the symptoms of tetanus. She revived for a few minutes under their ministrations, and they had made a note of some words she tried to say through clenched teeth. These had sounded like: "Jarg, Jarg—cats—will." Nothing could be done, and Madame Larsen died about ten o'clock. Maître Hoffmayer had called towards the end, and had begged them not to stir from the room until his friend, Monsieur Bertillon, came. They promised this, and he had then rushed away to fetch us.

The moment the doctors had withdrawn, Monsieur Bertillon dropped his mask of indifference. His eyes glittered, a flush came to his cheeks, and his speech, ever sharp and concise, became almost clipped.

"You, Rousseau," he snapped, "stand outside that door and allow no one to pass, but stand where you are not seen and report if anyone tries to enter." Then, when Rousseau turned to obey, he beckoned to me.

"Your lamps and lenses. Please sit down for a moment, Monsieur Dufresne. I wish to get the atmosphere of this room."

We obediently withdrew to a corner. Bertillon remained in the centre, his eyes roving from spot to spot.

"They are clever scoundrels," he muttered. "Well, we shall see if our brains cannot beat them."

BERTILLON AT WORK.

IT was wonderful to watch the great criminologist at work. I perceived that he was now convinced that husband and wife had been murdered. Indeed, this second mysterious death so soon after the first made it seem likely, but I failed to follow his rapid deductions. An hour passed whilst I stood and watched him scrutinizing, measuring, and scribbling in his notebook; or, obedient to his orders, transferred finger-prints and photographed scratches and stains. At last, after another long and careful study of the body, he straightened up with a sigh and called us to him.

"Murder," he said in a low voice, glancing anxiously at the door. "A callous and clever murder. I am far from clear about the method yet. But this is what I know. That poor woman fought for her freedom when she realized that death was near. There were two people with her, for we have three different types of finger-prints: her own and those of the criminals. She was held a prisoner until the disease had rendered her helpless. Her wrists are terribly bruised and scratched and her nightgown is torn. A wisp of the lace is on the curtain hook and her moist hands have smeared the window pane. That was when she tried to gain the balcony. She was dragged away, but her nails scratched the paint around, and on the window fastening. Some of it is still under her nails. Then she attempted to unlock the door, and the key was torn from her hand.

"There is a deep furrow near the keyhole, and the end of the key has a shaving of paint adhering to it. After that she must have collapsed and was put to bed again. You can see where her feet have pulled the lower sheet away when they pushed her in. But I imagine she recovered for a short time. Probably they locked her in and left her alone when they sent for the doctors. With superhuman courage she dragged herself to that writing table and wrote a message. There is a black pencil stain on the second finger of the right hand, and the broken point of a pencil was on the floor. We have not a moment to lose. Send your motor-cyclist to the *juge d'instruction* and demand

a search-warrant. Meanwhile, call gendarmes. We must surprise Larsen in his bungalow before he can destroy valuable evidence. Perhaps the message she wrote is still to be found. It was in that drawer, for on the edge are the dead woman's finger-marks and those of a man. We have not sufficient evidence for an arrest, but we are justified in searching. Quickly, now."

Dufresne at once ran to fetch the gendarmes who were outside the gate. As we came out Rousseau stepped from a little recess and saluted.

"The girl sneaked downstairs, but ran up again when she saw me."

"Then go to her room and see she touches nothing. Order her to sit quietly in a chair," Bertillon said, sharply.

The finger-prints Madame Larsen left on the window while she was struggling for life.

WE BEARD LARSEN IN HIS DEN.

WHEN we reached the grounds, Monsieur Dufresne was already waiting outside the bungalow with the uniformed police. Bertillon at once pushed the door open without ceremony and entered. A tall, broad-shouldered man with long fair hair and curly beard started up at our unexpected irruption. It was my first clear view of Larsen. He had the brow of a philosopher and the eyes of a madman. His face contracted with rage and his fists clenched ominously, but the presence of the gendarmes caused him to restrain his temper.

"Sit down," Dufresne said, sharply, "and place your hands on the table. We are going to search this place. If you move from there, I'll have you placed under arrest."

"Search away," Larsen snarled. "You're welcome to all you can find. But I warn you. This is an outrage, and I'll make you regret it."

Dufresne shrugged his shoulders and stepped to the table. "I'll watch him while you search," he said, quietly.

Unfortunately, this second investigation seemed fated to be as fruitless as the first, which Rousseau and I had carried out. We were about to go when Bertillon, who had been observing the man's eyes narrowly, walked to a small cupboard and pulled open the door. With a hoarse growl Larsen started up, but sank down again as the police sprang forward.

Bertillon came back and held out a double sheet of foolscap with several seals on it.

"Is this the will your brother made?" he asked Larsen.

"Yes, and it is none of your business. That is a private paper. I demand its instant return."

"It shall be returned to you, but I wish to examine it first." Our motor-cyclist came stumbling in at that opportune moment.

"And here is our search-warrant, you see, Monsieur Larsen. So you will be wise not to make trouble. If you are innocent of any plot against your brother and his wife you have nothing to fear."

"You are mad, you fool," Larsen replied, but I saw that his brow was damp with perspiration and his face deathly pale.

Dufresne posted two men in the grounds with orders to prevent either Larsen or Bianca from leaving. A search of the girl's room revealed nothing unusual, except a circular concave mirror, which might have been only a toilet requisite, but which Bertillon believed to have been used for signalling from the window. I understood then why he had pulled out the main electrical switch the moment we had entered the house. He had thus prevented Bianca from warning Larsen of our visit.

REVENGED BY A DEAD HAND.

ONCE in the car, which drove us immediately to the Quai des Orfèvres, Bertillon lay back and laughed silently. I dare say I looked astonished, for he said :—

" Oh, the clever, clever woman ! Although dead, I think she has avenged her husband and herself. She knew that any written message proclaiming the truth would inevitably be found and destroyed by those beasts. But she was inspired, and she wrote it on something they could not destroy. Don't you see their dilemma ? They commit murder, double murder, and risk the guillotine in order to obtain the insurance money and Sven Larsen's wealth. Sven had unfortunately made a foolish will by which his brother became the sole heir if the wife died, but he added a clause later giving his wife the right to dispose of everything by a fresh will. Thus they were driven to kill her before she could do so. Only—*to inherit, they must produce the old one. And it is on the margin of the will* that she wrote her denunciation. Splendid, splendid ! A stroke of genius. Either they destroy it and lose all, or they must risk producing it."

" But," I objected, " I saw no pencilling."

" There isn't any. Larsen effaced it with rubber and powdered pumice-stone, but we can bring it out again, as you well know."

" Why the pumice-stone ? "

" Because—I said the woman was inspired—she pressed down as hard as she could with the pencil so as to mark the paper. I guessed that when I found the stain on her finger, and that sharp broken point on the carpet. So where she had written Larsen made the margin smooth with pumice-stone. He is very ingenious, but he knows nothing of scientific investigation."

" You will use iodine vapour ? " I asked.

" Yes, iodine vapour and photography. Oh—we've got him now."

It was late in the afternoon before my negatives were sufficiently clear to be read—and a dreadful pathetic message it was. Several words were missing, but there was enough without them.

" Dying, like my husband," it ran, hacked and broken, along the edge. " It is the cats' claws that carry the disease—my poor sweet cats. Jarg—Jarg Larsen is the fiend who has killed us both. I accuse him and Bianca of murder. I am a prisoner. Thank God he left the will behind, I know he dare not destroy it. He laughed and jeered—but, God——" then there came a deep scratch where the pencil had broken. Bertillon looked at me, his face grey with horror.

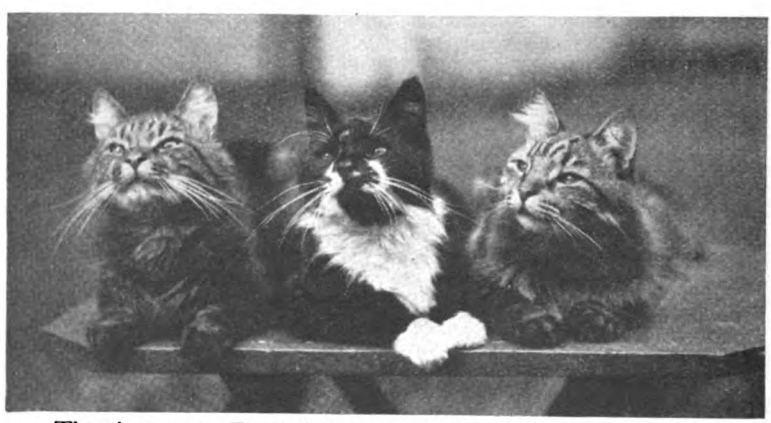
" If only I had known of that foolish will, I could have warned her in time. Get the *juge d'instruction*. I must have a warrant for their arrest at once. Tell Dufresne to let me have a dozen men and two fast cars. Hurry. For once I'll be present when the police get their man."

House and grounds were in darkness when we arrived, and the gate was locked. Rousseau soon had it open, but a cry from Dufresne stopped us as we were about to rush to the bungalow.

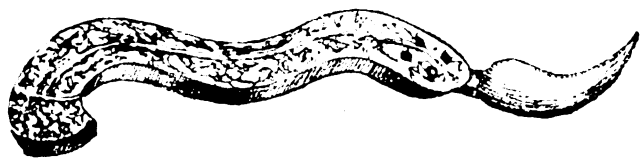
" The two officers ! " he cried. " Where are they ? "

" Go carefully," Rousseau growled. " Perhaps he has killed them."

To our dismay the door of the bungalow stood wide open. Across the threshold lay one of our men, his head smashed by a blow from behind ; the other was nowhere to be seen. The large laboratory looked as though a cyclone had wrecked it. Broken bottles and retorts were piled in heaps—and books lay scattered everywhere. A loud wailing and scratching from the back room caused us to run there. Rousseau was first and stumbled over a body stretched before the cats' cage. It was Bianca, and she was dead. A cloth had been tied tightly over the nose and mouth, and from it came a smell of bitter almonds.



The three cats, Flock, Jim, and Goldie—innocent accomplices of Jarg Larsen.



The curious Chinese claw which gave Jarg Larsen the idea of using the cats for his subtle crimes, and with which Bianca eventually killed him.

"Prussic acid," Bertillon exclaimed. "Better put on gloves and turn your head away when you untie it."

In the girl's hand we found a curious instrument. It was a sinuous carved ivory handle, with a steel blade shaped like a claw at the end; and the point was blood-stained.

Bertillon looked at this thoughtfully.

"Strange," he muttered. "What did she hope to do with that?"

We carried the girl to a couch and placed our men in hiding all over the grounds in case Larsen returned. Telephone and telegraph circulated his description immediately and the frontiers and port authorities were warned. The man's exceptional size would make disguise very difficult. None of us left headquarters that night, and just after dawn a telephone call came from Feignies, the Belgian frontier. It was from the second detective. He had been stunned by a blow on the head, but was able to obtain a car and follow Larsen. He had seen the fellow board a train at a wayside station, but arrived too late to stop him. He had thereupon telegraphed to the frontier and followed in the car. Larsen was now in a cell.

THE END OF LARSEN.

HE was brought to Paris the next afternoon and taken to the depot. But he never stood his trial. In the morning an urgent message came from the infirmary that Larsen was dying. *During the night he had developed tetanus.* We were in time to take down a broken statement before his jaws set rigidly. He died the same day.

Bertillon came to my office after the visit to the infirmary and examined the queer instrument we had found in Bianca's hand.

"Poetic justice," he said, with a twisted smile. "I have been reading Larsen's diary. Between commonplace entries he had written with invisible ink. I got no reaction until I tried water with sugar. He had used a solution of Beta naphthol, an excellent trick. An evil creature, that Larsen! He knew that by using tetanus *bacilli* it would be almost impossible to prove that the brother and his wife were murdered. He was a doctor, you see. He had discovered that the *bacillus* was present in quantities near the bungalow and he rubbed the cats' claws in the soil. Both his brother and the wife were very fond of the animals, and I imagine he would pull them away brutally whilst his brother and the wife were caressing them, causing the poor things to cling desperately with their claws and thus produce the fatal scratches. Afterwards he cleaned the claws with carbolic. He must have intended to use that ivory tool first. It is Chinese. No doubt the steel claw at the end gave him the idea of making his cats the innocent conveyers of the germs instead. Bianca was his accomplice in everything. Poor girl, she was utterly in his power. The man was mad, of course; his diary is full of the most weird nonsense. Sorcery, devil worship, and the like. You heard him confess that she attacked him when he was preparing for flight, because he refused to take her along. He didn't know when he killed her that during the struggle she had cut him on the neck with that steel claw, but when I spoke of it he groaned and said: 'I steeped it in a tetanus culture I invented. I meant it for her, but hadn't time to use it.'

"That cut on his brother's foot was his initial mistake, of course; that and the finger-prints on the razor made me certain a cunning crime had been committed; because Sven Larsen *had no corns!*

"Write out the case for me and photograph all the exhibits. I'll keep them in my archives."

(*Next month: "In the Séance Room."*)

THE CRIME-PREVENTERS.—III.

One False Step

By

MARTEN CUMBERLAND

Illustrated by
CONRAD LEIGH

DESPITE the fact that Loreto Santos was often accused of being a crank, usually his intelligence appeared to be singularly well balanced. He believed in attacking crime from the point of view of anticipation and prevention, and that represented his sole personal interest in criminal matters.

His attitude towards the "submerged" classes was that of a philanthropist, and was perfectly sincere. He did not believe in what he termed "social revenge," and the ruthless tracking down of unfortunates was repellent to his nature.

At the same time he was not a sentimentalist, and if he had a quarrel with the modern legal machine it was not because that mechanism punished criminals, but because it tended to create them first and penalize them after production.

Loreto was that rare thing, a highly civilized man. His social sense, his consciousness of communal strivings and sufferings, was extraordinarily acute, yet he was not, in the crude sense of the term, a "Socialist," for he believed in levelling up, and never in levelling down. He wished to see new wealth created in abundance, and perceived no social gain in redistribution of the wealth already existing.

Usually, therefore, though Loreto frequently bestirred himself to frustrate and stop the criminal, he left the tracking down and punishing of felons to the police.

The case of Ottaviani's murder was something of an exception. The man who stabbed Gabriel Ottaviani was delivered to justice by Loreto, and many have charged him with inconsistency in consequence, whilst others have said that he allowed his personal feelings to disturb the usual philosophic detachment that characterized him.

This may be true, for Ottaviani was a kindly and talented musician, whom Loreto loved.

After all, Loreto was a young man—he was only thirty-five—and it is perfectly plausible that indignant sorrow may have acted on him as a motive. Nevertheless, it is certain that Loreto betrayed his friend's murderer in order to prevent a crime that was, in Loreto's eyes, every whit as vile as the murder itself.

And those who know Loreto Santos best hold that only this second premeditated outrage induced him to act as he did. Certainly it is the only time recorded in which Loreto's activities could possibly be suspected of containing a particle of the "revenge complex," as he would probably call it.

IT was a beautiful mild evening in early June when Gabriel Ottaviani was done to death.

Loreto and his sister Cleta were entertaining at their big house in Regent's Park, and the guest of the evening was Ricardo Menendez, the famous Spanish pianist.

Menendez did not come to dinner, but had promised to drop in later and to play, and, as the man was inaccessible in the ordinary way, and distinguished, the guests awaited him in a certain flutter of expectation.

They sat about in Loreto's beautiful music-room, and they failed to give to the musicians who performed to them the attention that those talented artistes deserved. The name and reputation of Ricardo Menendez overshadowed the lesser folk, and disturbed minds that would otherwise have been tranquil and receptive.

It is one thing to hear a supreme artiste in a public concert hall. It is another

experience to hear him in the smaller compass of a private room, where there is no rustling of programmes; where there is a delightful sense of intimacy, and where—magical thought!—the great artiste may even consent to play one's favourite study or sonata!

The whispering grew, therefore, and Cleta Santos frowned as she leaned forward towards her brother.

"I hope Menendez comes soon," she murmured. "Our guests are in no mood for the smaller fry, even though they are good."

Loreto smiled grimly.

"It's just the hypnotism of a big name," he answered. "Many of these people couldn't tell the playing of Menendez from my own."

A talented 'cellist, meanwhile, struggled valiantly against the steadily rising flow of talk, and Loreto rose quickly to his feet.

"I think I'd better play myself after Nicandro," he said, bending over his sister. "I don't want my artistes to be snuffed out by this buzzing!"

As the 'cellist concluded his piece polite applause rippled through the room, and at the same time a servant who had been waiting at the door of the room entered with an announcement that Menendez had arrived.

Loreto sighed with relief, and hurried out into the hall to meet his distinguished friend and guest.

MENENDEZ had just been helped out of an overcoat which he wore despite the mildness of the weather. He was ridding himself of a long white silk scarf, and, as he did so, he whistled softly, between his teeth, a slow and melancholy air.

"Ah! my young friend!" he exclaimed, as he saw Loreto. "What is the good news? You are well, no? And Cleta?"

Loreto shook the hand held out to him, and answered for his health and that of his sister.

"Good!" said Menendez. "Good! I am late, no? But then I am always late—it is expected of me!"

He was a rather short, square-shouldered man, with a large frame, and a suggestion of great virility and strength in his whole appearance. A vast shock of hair, dark but just touched here and there with grey, covered his large head. The forehead was low but broad, the black eyes small, but very quick and bright.

"By the way, have you seen Ottaviani?" asked Loreto. "I invited him to come, but he has not turned up. I thought you two might come along together."

The great pianist shook his head.

"I have not seen Ottaviani—not for three weeks now," he said. "*Caramba!* What a rush I have had! Every day a fresh town. This afternoon I give a recital at Bournemouth, then rush away and come to your little affair. No time to visit Ottaviani."

Loreto was silent for a moment, and then he took the other's arm.

"Well, it's awfully good of you to come," he replied. "I'll show you the way to the music-room. The audience has been getting a little restive. I'm afraid one or two of them are not real music-lovers—you know how it is?"

Menendez laughed loudly, throwing back his dark mop of hair.

"In England—yes," he said. "These English audiences! They go to a concert because it is the correct thing; they applaud because it is the correct thing, and the artiste has a big name. But"—he wagged a broad, spatulated finger threateningly beneath Loreto's nose—"if they flap their foolish hands while I am playing my last notes, I shall tell them what they are, and what I think of them!"

Loreto grinned delightedly.

"Excellent!" he said. "I should enjoy hearing it!"

He ushered Menendez into the music-room, and a murmur of welcome, and some applause, greeted the big man. Cleta came forward, looking very beautiful in her wonderful gown of shimmering metallic gold that rivalled the gold of her hair and the gold-flecked brown of her eyes. She held out her hand, and Menendez bowed a little theatrically as he raised her fingers to his lips.

"You will play us something now?" she questioned. "Or will you have some wine or refreshments first?"

"After," he said. "After, I take wine. Just a little now and I cannot play. I am stupid like that! The wine goes to my fingers!"

He smiled, and mounted on to a small raised dais, where a Pleyel piano had been placed, specially to suit his tastes.

A little whisper still stirred amid the audience. The women somehow worshipped Menendez, not because he was suave and gallant, for he was often abominably rude, but probably because of the virility in the man, the suggestion of something almost hypnotic in his personality, and, perhaps, because of the very arrogance that lay in his every look and gesture.

He smiled now, and glanced about the room.

"What shall I play you?" he asked, and, immediately a hubbub arose in which the cries for Chopin and Schumann seemed to predominate.

"All right," said the pianist. "Schumann,

then. What shall it be? The 'Carnaval'? The 'Etudes Symphoniques'?"

Again there were conflicting cries, and Menendez raised one hand.

"I will play you Schumann's 'Carnaval,'" he said.

He slightly raised the music-stool, and a little murmur arose that did not die away immediately. Certainly it did not die away quickly enough for Ricardo Menendez, for he turned upon them.

"Ladies, ladies," he said, smiling grimly. "As a great man said once, on a rather similar occasion, 'we are here to make music, not to save the Capitol.'"

After that he got his silence, and soon, from beneath his broad, capable hands, there flowed the whimsical, naive, intensely dramatic melodies that Robert Schumann created for the delight of a tired world.

Loreto sat close to the piano and dreamed, yet with a wakeful eye.

One of the finest amateurs in the country, Loreto had a technical interest in the sheer virtuosity of the performance, as well as a musician's appreciation of the great music. Fascinated, he watched those amazing hands, noted the astonishing flexibility of the wrists, the clever fingering in difficult passages, the airy touch of those wonderful finger-tips that seemed naturally padded like the paws of a cat.

"Harlequin" tripped his way, and danced magically along the keys; there followed the exquisite haunting melody of "Chopin," then the quaint humours of "Pantalon" and "Columbine," and, finally, the thrilling magnificence of "David Against the Philistines."

And now, indeed, the audience was silent, until, with the final crashing chord, the pianist's hands fell from the keys and groped for a handkerchief.

The applause that followed was loud and genuine enough, and Loreto awoke from a reverie to realize that a servant was touching him upon the shoulder.

"Can you come to the telephone, sir?" the man inquired. "Mr. Ottaviani's servant is on the 'phone. He is very agitated, sir, and wants to speak to you at once. I think something has happened."

Something had happened! White-faced, Loreto listened at the instrument to the quavering voice of Lefevre, Ottaviani's confidential man-servant.

Lefevre, it appeared, had gone out for an hour or two, returning at ten o'clock. The man had then walked about the house, pulling down blinds and locking doors, and imagining all the time that his master had gone out—had gone, in fact, to Loreto's musical party. And so it was that Lefevre, entering the music-room carelessly, came suddenly upon the prostrate body of his master.

Ottaviani was dead, as an examination showed immediately. He had changed into evening-dress, evidently intending to visit Loreto, but someone must have entered the house in Lefevre's absence and struck down the unfortunate Italian.

From a wall of the music-room a short Arabian knife had been taken, and this weapon now pierced the side of Gabriel Ottaviani. The composer lay where he had been struck down, beside his beloved piano. It looked as though he had been stabbed even as he played, for the music-stool was overturned beside him.

For the rest, he was dead, and there seemed no clue as to who had killed him.

"The kindest of men, Monsieur Santos," sobbed Lefevre, in French. "I ask myself who could have done this thing? That I should go out to-night of all nights and leave him alone!"

"You cannot blame yourself, Lefevre," answered Loreto, in the man's own language. "It is just fate, my friend. You have informed the police of this terrible affair?"

"But yes, monsieur. They are here now. Inspector Comfort, who knows you, is in charge. I asked his permission to telephone you the news, in case you expected my master and began to grow anxious."

Loreto said a few words of comfort to the man and turned away from the telephone sick at heart. In silence he walked back to the music-room, and came to the door just as Menendez had finished a Chopin study.

AT Loreto's entrance his guests all looked at him, for his white face told them that something unusual had occurred. Cleta came quickly across the room.

"Is anything the matter, Loreto?" she asked.

He nodded slowly.

"My friends," he said, raising his voice, "I am sorry to interrupt your evening's pleasure, but it is impossible that we go on."

A questioning buzz broke out, through which cut Loreto's voice, calmly and seemingly without emotion:—

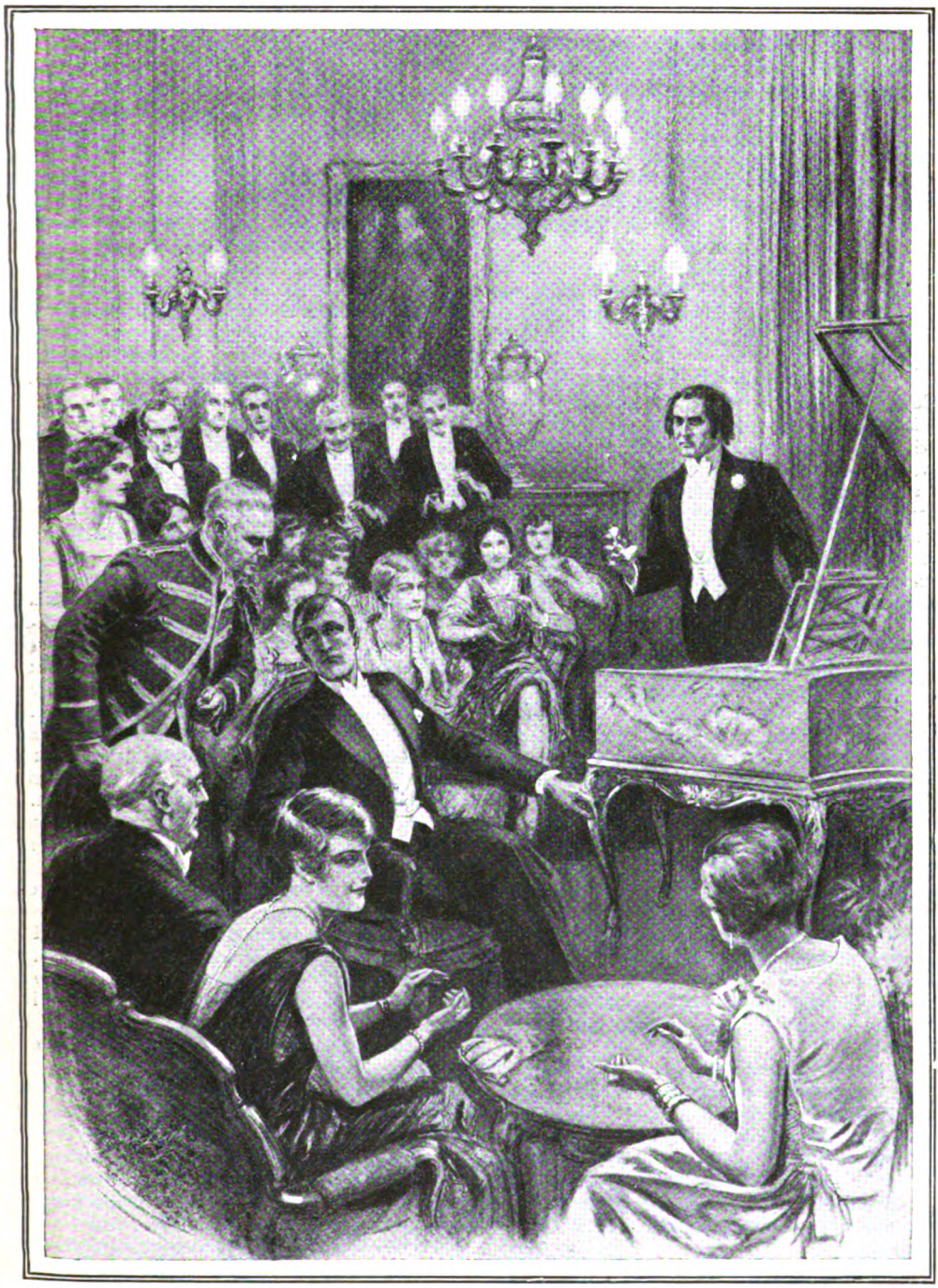
"Gabriel Ottaviani has been stabbed in his own house. His servant has just telephoned the information."

"Stabbed!" gasped Cleta. "Ottaviani stabbed! Was it—was it fatal?"

Loreto's eyes flickered around the anxious faces watching him.

"Ottaviani is dead," he said. "Most of you knew him personally, all of you knew him by reputation. In the circumstances we can have no more music to-night."

They all rose to their feet. A murmur of consternation ran through the entire



"Can you come to the telephone, sir?" the servant inquired. "I think something has happened."

room. Loreto was besieged with questions, but could add nothing to the information he had already given.

The shocked voice of Ricardo Menendez rose above all others. He had known the dead man more intimately than the rest, and his excitable temperament expressed itself in loud and passionate lamentations.

Slowly the guests began to file out of the house. Cloaks and hats were given and received in silence; husbands and wives whispered of the tragedy as they settled themselves in car or taxi.

In the hall Loreto helped Menendez on with coat and scarf. The great pianist was swearing softly and volubly in Spanish. There was a hint of tears in his bright, dark eyes.

"It is barbarous!" he said. "To be killed like that! Here in London! Poor Gabriel, he was young and talented. But they must catch this criminal; he must receive his punishment!"

"He will," said Loreto, quietly. "That is one of the most certain things in this uncertain life of ours. The criminal manufactures his own punishment in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. Good night, Ricardo."

BACK in the music-room, he found Cleta walking about and nervously putting in order the disarranged chairs.

"This is dreadful, Loreto," she said. "Poor Ottaviani! And he was engaged to be married!"

"To Lucia Morini," said Loreto, absently. "It will be terrible for her."

"The poor girl! I suppose there is nothing we can do, Loreto?"

He shook his head. He had seated himself and was gazing with unseeing eyes at a mask of Beethoven which hung upon the wall. His face was white, his light grey eyes looked tired and had a curious appearance of strain.

"If I could only have foreseen this!" he muttered. "If only there had been a hint!"

Cleta looked inquiringly at his set face.

"You will do nothing now?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"There is nothing to do," he said, heavily.

The girl sank into a chair and leaned back with half-closed eyes. Against a large black cushion her golden head was outlined clearly, a beautiful and rather exotic picture.

"This kind of thing is too awful when it happens to oneself and in one's own circle," she said. "One reads of such things in the newspapers, and they seem to mean so little. Who is there who could have killed Gabriel? What motive could there be?"

She began to discuss the murder, but Loreto made no comment. He still sat in the same tense attitude, staring with pensive eyes at the wall before him, his firm lips pressed tightly together.

At last Cleta rose slowly to her feet.

"I shall go to bed," she declared. "I feel tired, but Heaven only knows whether I shall sleep. Good night, Loreto. There boy, you mustn't take this thing too much to heart."

She kissed him swiftly, while he gave a faint smile at her final words.

"Good night, Cletita," he responded, and when she had gone he lit a cigarette and began to pace the floor. His reverie was broken by the advent of a servant who announced Inspector Comfort, and a moment later the big detective entered the room.

"Good evening, Santos," he said. "This is a nasty business—a very nasty business."

He lowered his big frame into a chair and shook his head gloomily.

"Great friend of yours, eh?" he asked.

"One of my best friends," said Loreto, quietly.

The Inspector shook his head again.

"It's a nasty business," he repeated. "And it's going to be a difficult case," he went on. "No one was seen to enter or leave the house in Lefevre's absence. There has been no robbery, and the weapon used was an ornament in the house itself. No finger-marks on the knife-haft—murderer must have worn gloves. Ottaviani seems to have been a popular man, and apparently there was no motive for murdering him."

The Inspector paused for a moment and, looking at Loreto, noticed his white, set face for the first time.

"This has been a great blow to you, Santos, eh?" the detective said, in a singularly soft and sympathetic tone. "It's horrible to lose a friend in such a manner! It's curious," he went on, his professional interest ousting other considerations—"it's curious that Ottaviani himself probably let the murderer into the house. Lefevre was out, and Ottaviani was alone. Of course the murderer may have broken into the house, or gained an entry by some plausible trick, but on the face of it one would almost imagine that it was an acquaintance of Ottaviani's who committed the crime. The murdered man seems to have been playing the piano when he was killed. I've discovered a list of the dead man's pupils and I'm looking into their records."

He leaned back in his chair and began to fill a pipe. His shrewd eyes travelled doubtfully over Loreto's quiet figure.

"I was wondering," he suggested, diffidently, "whether you would care to help

me in this case? Whether you would care to come along and have a look round?"

Loreto rose quickly to his feet and shook his head vigorously.

"No," he said. "No."

He took a pace or two about the room while the Inspector watched him curiously.

"You know my convictions, Comfort," he said. "Poor Ottaviani is dead, and there it ends as far as I am concerned. Nothing can alter the terrible facts of the case!"

"Still," began Comfort, "if a friend of mine——"

"I know. That is how all vendettas begin. That is how the poor human microbe starts his crusades, massacres, pogroms, and wars! Revenge, eh? It's a glorious thing, but it stands in the way of all progress, all enlightenment, all civilization. What is the use of this Guelph and Ghibelline business? Does it satisfy honest grief? Does it result in real justice? No; murder leads to fresh murder, outrage is followed by outrage, and men become brute beasts. The whole world is split by such philosophy into armed camps; nation against nation; colour against colour, creed against creed. The very sexes fight to-day; and class wars against class even when their interests are mutual. I, for one, will have none of it. The revenge instinct cannot bring poor Gabriel back to life!"

Loreto lighted a cigarette with fingers that shook slightly, while Comfort leaned back in his chair, a little amazed at the storm of eloquence he had provoked. He had never seen the calm, philosophic Santos in this light before.

"No," said Loreto, firmly. "The very fact that Ottaviani was a friend of mine makes it all the more impossible for me to take a hand in the case. The principles involved are even greater than friendship; they cut deeper than personal feeling. Even if I knew who was the murderer, I should refrain from giving you his name."

Inspector Comfort nodded slowly. His keen eyes were fixed upon Loreto, and there was a look on the detective's face as though he were puzzled and struggling with thoughts and suspicions that he could scarcely believe.

"We all have our personal convictions, Santos," he said, quietly. "For my part, I would never attempt to argue on such matters with a man, especially with one who possesses a wider range of knowledge and culture than my own."

He puffed out tobacco-smoke, and leaned slightly forward.

"Still, it seems hard that the guilty man should go scot-free," he suggested. "A man who gets away with murder is dangerous. It seems easy. Sooner or later he will do it again. There's a strong possibility that many executions prevent the guilty subjects perpetrating other crimes; a glance at criminal records shows that. Successful murderers go on killing."

Loreto snapped his fingers impatiently.

"This one won't. The circumstances are——"

He stopped, and the Inspector rose abruptly to his feet. He was looking at Loreto's white, strained face, and Comfort's eyes held a look of amazement.

"By God! Santos," he cried. "You know who did this thing!"

"Even if I did——"

"You do! I can see you do, and it's your duty——"

Loreto laughed harshly.

"When I am puzzled upon any point of duty I will come to Inspector Comfort of the Criminal Investigation Department," he sneered.

His tone changed abruptly.

"I'm sorry, old man. This affair has rattled me. We shall never agree on this point, but even if I knew who killed Gabriel—and I don't admit that I do—I couldn't tell you. I couldn't!"

The two men looked at one another for several seconds, then the Inspector held out his hand.

"Good night, Santos," he said, gravely. "You have your convictions, and I have mine. To me a deliberate murderer is a mad dog who ought to be put in a lethal chamber. When I can possibly catch them I strain every nerve to do so. And, if I can, I'll catch the man who killed Ottaviani."

Loreto took the other's hand. He had now recovered to the full his usual self-possession.

"Good night, Comfort," he said. "I almost hope you will succeed."

The Inspector left the house, and Loreto was alone, but for a long time he paced the music-room, and there was very little sleep for him that night.

TIME passed, and for Loreto it was a period of mental torture, when all his profoundest beliefs swayed unsteadily and all his philosophy brought him little consolation.

For Inspector Comfort, too, the days passed slowly and left the worthy man in a state of irritated perplexity bordering upon confusion.

The murder of Gabriel Ottaviani remained a mystery. A study of his list of pupils brought nothing of any value to light. All of them were harmless young men and women, passing blameless lives in the study of harmony and counterpoint.

The man Lefevre was honest, faithful, and above suspicion. There seemed to be an absence of motive in the crime that made it baffling, and Comfort could discover nothing that led to any helpful clue.

And all the time Loreto Santos knew exactly who the murderer was! Comfort was sure of that. This was the thing that worried the Inspector, rankled in his brain, and sometimes brought him to a state bordering on frenzy. There were times when he would awake in the middle of the night hot all over with the discomfort of this distracting thought.

How did Santos know? What had put that agile brain on to the right track? And how had he discovered the truth so quickly, and without leaving his house?

At this point in his reflections, Inspector Comfort would groan. The thing was too much altogether! Santos had *known* who had killed Ottaviani, and had known it within an hour or two of the crime being committed. Possibly he had known who was guilty as soon as Lefevre telephoned the terrible news. What, then, had Santos noticed that Comfort could not see? What knowledge did Santos possess that had hitherto escaped the Inspector?

If he had not known Santos so extremely well, and had not known him for years, the Inspector might even have suspected his able friend. Santos had just those gifts that would enable a man to get away with murder, but it was not in his nature to commit one. In any case, Santos had spent all the evening with his sister and fifty guests, and consequently his alibi was perfect.

So Inspector Comfort set his teeth and pursued his investigations as hopefully as possible, whilst he cursed occasionally at the moral convictions responsible for Loreto's determined silence. There came a morning, three months later, when Cleta, opening a newspaper at the breakfast table, uttered

"Santos!" he cried. "You know who did this thing!"

a sharp exclamation. Loreto looked up from his coffee without particular interest.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the girl. "That's very sudden! Why, poor Ottaviani has only been dead three months!"

"What is it?" asked Loreto, sharply.

"Lucia Morini is engaged to marry Ricardo Menendez!"

"What?"

Loreto's voice was harshly incredulous. He rose abruptly from the table, and looked at the newspaper over Cleta's shoulder.

"Evidently they wanted to keep it quiet," pursued Cleta. "Neither Lucia nor Ricardo has written or said anything to us. Anyway, the newspapers have got hold of the story somehow. Really, Menendez is an extraordinary kind of man! Women seem to lose their heads over him. Sometimes I think he hypnotizes them! There was poor little Kitty Marsh, and now Lucia is going to marry him. And she was head over heels in love with Gabriel three months ago!"

Loreto looked at the newspaper for a moment or two, and muttered something his sister did not hear. Then:—

"I wonder if this is true?" he murmured.

"It's in the paper," said Cleta, a little ingenuously, and added, "Ricardo is a good deal older than Lucia."

Loreto went out of the room, and she heard him telephoning from the library. When he returned she was struck by the pallor of his face.

"Loreto!" she cried. "Is anything wrong? The news of this engagement hasn't upset you, has it?"

"How could it?" he replied, forcing a smile.

And with that Cleta had to be content, though her mind was disturbed and agitated by the strangest conjectures.

Loreto during the whole of that day was evidently in a singular state of mind, and the girl was perturbed when she heard him that night pacing the floor of his bedroom tirelessly.

To her questions he made no answer, or answered only with evasions, and the next day he surprised her with a curious statement.

"I've asked Menendez to call and see us early this afternoon," he said.

"Oh! And Lucia?"

"No, I didn't ask Miss Morini. By the way, Comfort may look in a little later—after Menendez has arrived."

This time Cleta said nothing, but she made up for her silence by thinking a great deal.

ABOUT three o'clock that afternoon Menendez arrived and was shown into the drawing-room, where Cleta and Loreto awaited him. Upon a small table stood coffee and a decanter of rich golden wine.

"Will you take coffee?" asked Loreto, as his visitor seated himself. "Or will you take some wine? It is real Imperial Tokay from the Emperor Josef's palace. I can strongly recommend it."

"Thanks," said Menendez, smiling. "I will take the Tokay if Miss Santos will join me. I have already taken coffee with my lunch."

They drank their wine and talked of various trifles, until Loreto took charge of the conversation, and began to speak of the approaching marriage. As he did so Loreto turned smoothly into Spanish, and Cleta felt surprised, for, bilingual though he was, Loreto seldom used his native idiom. Educated in England, Loreto was more habituated to the English tongue, and Cleta could not understand this sudden transition.

And, as he spoke of Menendez's marriage, Loreto seemed to become more and more indiscreet. He who was always a perfect pattern of courtesy was beginning to talk in a way that even the closest friendship could never excuse.

To Cleta's astonishment, Loreto criticized the famous pianist's engagement with unpardonable candour. He spoke of Menendez's seniority to his young *fiancée;* he more than implied that the great man's life had been full of love affairs, many of them rather discreditable.

Warming to his subject, Loreto began to ask his visitor whether it was right that such a man as himself should marry any innocent young girl, and, especially, a girl who three months before had been engaged to one of his friends.

That appeared to be a point that Loreto returned to over and over again. For some reason he kept stressing the fact that Lucia, three months before, had been in love with Ottaviani.

To Cleta it seemed that some undercurrent of meaning and suggestion was concealed in her brother's extraordinary flow of words.

Menendez, meanwhile, was rapidly becoming enraged. He had drunk two glasses of the famous Tokay, and, unaccustomed to wine as he was, the stuff was already having its effect.

Beneath Loreto's criticism the pianist flushed, and shifted, and expostulated. Finally, he began to lose his temper, and his voice was raised in violent indignation.

Still Loreto continued his attack, and then, as they both talked loudly together, the door opened, and Inspector Comfort entered.

Even as Menendez struck, the detective seized

"Hullo, Comfort!" said Loreto, cheerfully. "Sit down, and help yourself to a glass of wine."

Immediately he turned again to Menendez and resumed his impertinences.

"Then," he said, pointedly, in Spanish, "am I to take it that you will insist on marrying Lucia Morini, despite all I have said to you; despite the fact that she once loved poor Gabriel, and despite the beastliness of it?"

At that Menendez's face flushed, and then went very white. His great head was flung back, and he glared at the impassive Loreto.

Inspector Comfort, meanwhile, had made no attempt to help himself to wine. He was sitting forward upon the edge of his chair. He could not understand a word of the

his arm and twisted the knife from his fingers.

conversation, but he watched Menendez narrowly.

"By what right," stuttered the pianist—"by what right do you question me, and pry into my affairs?"

"By right of the friendship I had for Ottaviani," said Loreto, sternly. "By that right I shall insist on this engagement being broken off, and, if you refuse——"

Menendez's face hardened ferociously.

"If I refuse?"

"Then," said Loreto, solemnly, and he changed swiftly to English—"then I shall tell Inspector Comfort the name of the man who killed Gabriel Ottaviani."

He was ready, more or less, for what might come, but it came so swiftly that he was nearly undone. With a hoarse cry,

Menendez rose from his chair. His hand went to his breast, and, as he stumbled forward, a thin-bladed knife flashed in the air.

Cleta cried a warning, but Inspector Comfort had been on the alert. Even as Menendez struck, the detective seized his arm and twisted the knife from his fingers. A moment later Menendez was handcuffed and cursing savagely.

"Damn you!" he shrieked. "Damn you, Santos! Another minute, and I kill you as I killed that poor fool Ottaviani. He try to take Lucia from me, but now he'll never have her."

The man was beside himself with passion. His voice rose on a dreadful inhuman note as he mouthed all kinds of atrocities. His swarthy face was purple with rage, and he fought desperately when two plain-clothes men entered the room and tried to take him away.

"Damn you, Santos!" he repeated. "You cursed police-spy! You——"

He was taken away to a waiting cab, while Loreto looked after him in silence and with a white face.

"Loreto!" stammered Cleta. "This is awful! So he killed poor Gabriel in order to get Lucia from him?"

Loreto nodded.

"It's a bad business when a man possessing Menendez's great talents has no control of his passions," he said, slowly. "He wanted Lucia, but that could not be. I had to stop it, Cleta. The thing was—was obscene!"

THAT evening Comfort called and found his friend moodily pacing the floor of his library.

"Menendez is dead," said the Inspector, quietly. "He had poison concealed about him somewhere. He committed suicide in his cell."

Loreto looked at the other and drew in a long breath.

"So!" he said. "Well, that is the best thing that could happen."

He took a turn about the room in silence for a moment.

"Comfort," he said, at last, "this has been a beastly affair I have lost two friends, and the fact that one of them was an unscrupulous murderer does not efface the tragedy of it. I loved Ottaviani, and I admired Menendez. But I could not let things go on. Menendez wanted Lucia, and that was too much for me! I tried to warn him, to frighten him from the marriage, but he wouldn't listen. Perhaps he misunderstood me; perhaps he thought that I would never know of his guilt. And now he's dead."

Loreto walked towards a cupboard.

"I don't often indulge in stimulants," he said; "but this seems to be an occasion for such things. There's still half a bottle of the Tokay left. Will you have a glass?"

"Thanks," said Comfort and watched his friend while he poured out the wine.

"Do you know, Santos," said the Inspector, "you're an amazing man! I should like to have your extraordinary gifts of observation. And," he added, handsomely, "I should like to have the brains to back that observation with!"

"You're very generous, Comfort," returned Loreto, with a smile. "Possibly that's why you've risen so quickly at the Yard!"

He sipped his wine appreciatively and sat down in a wide padded chair.

"You think I've done something wonderful to spot Menendez as the murderer of Gabriel," he continued. "It wasn't very clever, Comfort. The thing was practically a fluke. You see, Menendez came into my hall and, as he was taking off a scarf, he whistled softly to himself, as men will when their mind is somewhere else. I asked him if he had seen Ottaviani that evening, and Menendez answered that he had not seen Gabriel for three weeks."

Loreto lit a cigarette thoughtfully.

"I knew then that Menendez was lying," he resumed. "It was only later, when the news of the murder came through, that I knew why he had lied. I saw it on his face while I hesitated to answer Cleta's question as to whether Gabriel had been fatally stabbed or not. There were some trifling things that confirmed my suspicions, but it was Menendez's lie that put me on to the truth. He made one small mistake, and but for that mistake he might be alive and safe at this moment."

"What was his mistake?" asked Inspector Comfort. "How did you know he was lying?"

"When Menendez entered my hall," said Loreto, "he was whistling to himself a melody that Ottaviani had only composed that morning. And yet Menendez said that he had not seen the composer for three weeks. That was a false step on Menendez's part—the one small mistake for which he died."

Loreto raised his wineglass and finished off its contents.

"And now," he said, "for the Lord's sake let's talk about something else!"

"THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES"

A Great New "BULLDOG DRUMMOND" Serial

By

"SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

SYNOPSIS OF THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.

Joe Dixon, the narrator of the story, had joined "Bulldog Drummond" in the hunt for "Bulldog's" wife, Phyllis, who had been abducted by the woman Irma in revenge for the death of her late partner in crime, the bestial Carl Peterson, whom "Bulldog" had killed. Irma, in a letter, had explained to "Bulldog" that his wife was safe, that certain clues would be given him which, if followed up, might lead to death or to his wife's rescue; but that if the police were put on the trail Phyllis would be killed immediately. The first clues had led "Bulldog" and his friends, Darrell, Sinclair, Jerningham, Longworth, and Dixon, to Drayminster, where at the inn a conversation with a stranger had convinced Joe Dixon that the next clue was to be found at "The Mere," a gloomy, uninhabited house in the neighbourhood, and, borrowing a bicycle from the innkeeper's son, he set out alone to investigate.

IT was a beautiful night, warm and without a breath of wind, and I was soon clear of the village. I found the turning the boy had spoken of without difficulty—one that evidently would lead back towards the river. The surface was poor—it was scarcely more than a lane, and little used at that—and very soon some high trees made the darkness so intense that the going was hard. In fact, after a short time I dismounted and pushed on, on foot.

Now I make no bones about it, but the fact remains that with every step I took I found myself wishing more heartily that I had listened to the boy's advice.

There was a sort of dank feeling about that lane which got on my nerves, and the feeble little circle of light from the lamp dancing about in front of me as the bicycle jolted only seemed to make the surrounding darkness more impenetrable. And at last, acting on a sudden impulse, I blew it out, and left the bicycle against the hedge.

Came a sudden kink in the lane, and there within fifty yards of me stood the house. I stopped instinctively: what a fearsome-looking place it was. Trees were all round it except on one side, where a large pool of water lay stagnant and unruffled—doubtless the pool that had given the place its name. The house itself was a big one, and gave an impression of indescribable gloom.

I sat down on the bank beside the lane. Some plan of action had to be decided on. Up till now I hadn't really thought what I was going to do when I got there. Now it had to be faced. Obviously there was no use in sitting down and looking at the place; the clue, if my supposition was right,

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would be inside the house, and if I wanted to get it that is where I should have to go. And the more I thought of it the less did I relish it. I forced myself to view the matter from a common-sense point of view.

"Here," I said out loud, "is an old untenanted house—set, it is true, in gloomy surroundings, which look all the more gloomy because it happens to be dark. But it is merely a house consisting of bricks and mortar. You are a man of the world. Are you going to admit to yourself that you are afraid of exploring those bricks and mortar? Are you going to allow yourself to be influenced by an ancient story? At any rate, go a bit closer and have a look."

Skirting along the undergrowth I approached the house. Stone steps covered with weeds led up to the front door, which was overhung with trailing creepers and ivy. For a moment I hesitated; then I went up the steps and cautiously tried the handle of the door. To my great relief it was locked, and the feeling that honour was satisfied was very strong. I could now go back to the Angler's Rest in order to get something to open the door with. And even as I so decided I seemed to hear Drummond's voice saying, "What about the ground-floor windows? Didn't you try them?"

Right! I would. And then there would be no possibility of any back-chat. Keeping close into the wall, I skirted round the house. And I hadn't gone twenty yards before I was brought up standing. There in front of me was a wide-open window. All I had to do was to put my leg over the sill and I should be inside the house. I flung a leg over.

The dust was thick everywhere. It rose in choking clouds and deadened the sound of my feet as I crept towards the open door.

In front of me was the hall. I could just see the staircase to my right, and opposite me was a piece of furniture that looked like a hat-rack. I peered across at it. Was it my imagination, or was there something white that was hanging on one of the pegs—something that might be a piece of paper? Was it possible that here was the actual clue I was searching for?

I tiptoed across the hall, and almost trembling with excitement I struck a match. One word was written on it: "Excelsior."

The match burned out, and I did not light another. There was only one way to Excelsior in that house, and that was to go upstairs. And the thought of going upstairs left me chilled to the marrow.

I STOOD staring at the dim outline of the staircase fading into utter blackness at the top. Where I was a faint light did come from the open door by which I had entered. Above the darkness was absolute. Should I, or should I not? And though I say it myself, I consider that a certain credit was due to me for deciding in the affirmative.

Still on tiptoe I crossed the hall to the foot of the stairs. A mouldering carpet existed in patches, and I began to ascend cautiously for fear of tripping up. But no care on my part could prevent the stairs creaking abominably, and in the silence each step I took sounded like a pistol-shot.

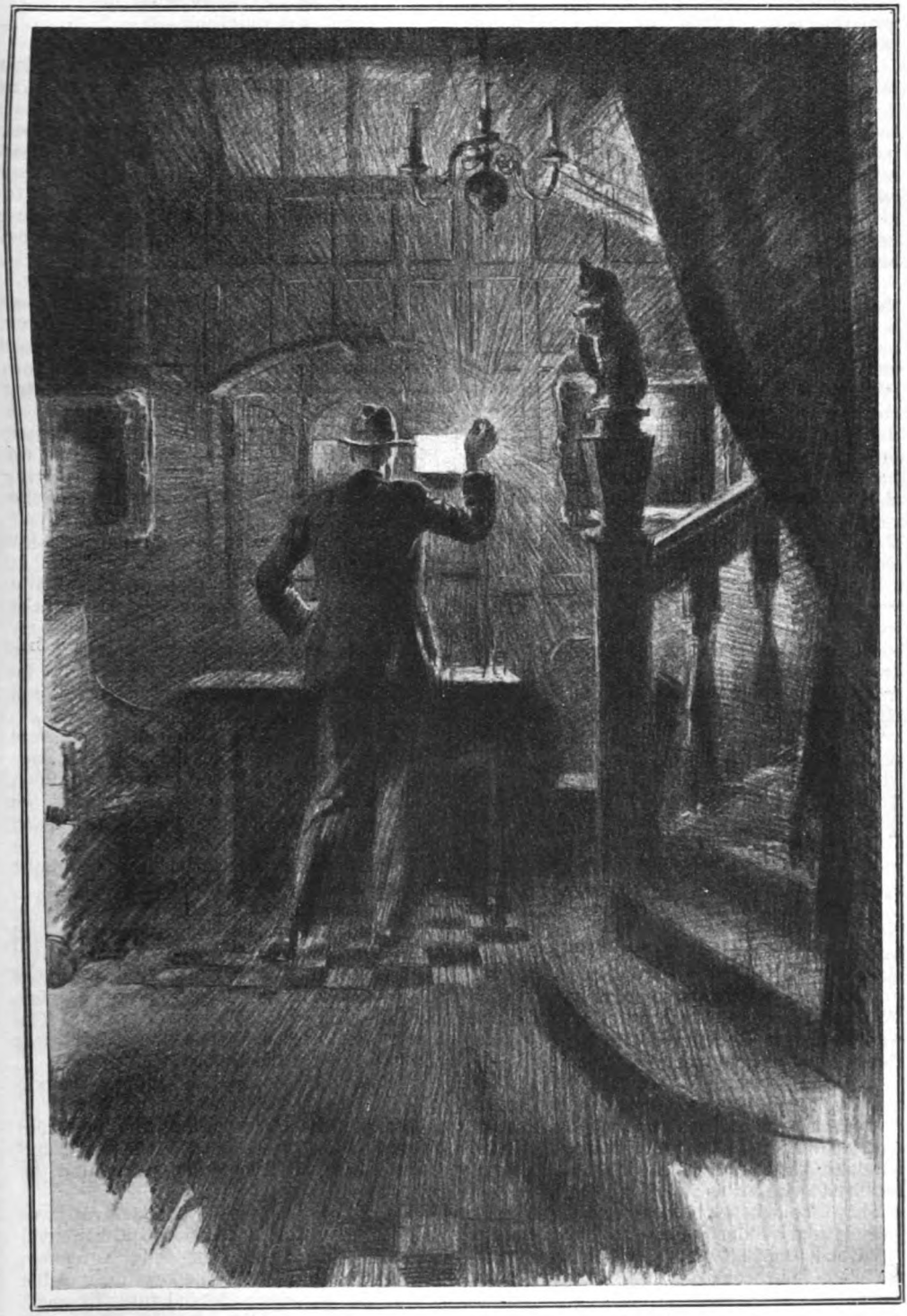
At last I reached the top. Now that I was there the darkness was not quite so intense. A little of the light from the open door below managed to filter up. To my right and left ran a passage, and putting my hand in my pocket I counted the coins. Odd to the left, even to the right. There were seven, and I started feeling my way towards the left. And I can't have taken more than half-a-dozen steps when a strange creaking noise came from the hall, and at the same moment I realized it was getting darker. I stopped abruptly, and peered below. And what I saw froze me stiff with fright. The door by which I had entered was closing, and even as I looked at it, it shut with a bang.

For a moment or two I gave way to blind panic. I rushed, as I thought, in the direction of the stairs, and hit a wall. I turned round and rushed another way, and hit another wall. Then I forced myself to stand still. I'd lost my bearings completely—I hadn't an idea where the stairs were. Like a fool that I was, I had walked straight into the trap, and the trap had shut behind me.

My first instinctive thought was to light a match—anything seemed better than this impenetrable blackness. And then prudence won. If there were people round me, all I should do would be to give myself away. I was safer in the dark.

Suddenly I started violently; an odd slithering noise had begun. It was rather as if a sack full of corn was being bumped on the floor, and it seemed to come from my left. I peered in what I thought was the right direction, while the sweat ran off me in streams. Was it my imagination, or was there a faint luminosity in the darkness about three feet from the ground? I stared at it and it moved. With each bump it moved, and it was coming closer. Step by step I backed away from it; step by step it kept pace with me. And for the first time in my life I knew the meaning of the word terror. Frightened I had been many times: this was stark, raving horror.

Then, as if a veil had suddenly been torn away, came the change. One instant there had been merely a faint lessening of the darkness; the next, I found myself staring into a shining yellow face of such inconceivable malignity that I almost screamed. It was



One word was written on it: "Excelsior."

not two feet away, and about on a level with my chest. I hit at it blindly, and found my wrist caught in a grip of steel. Then I felt a hand creeping up until it reached my throat, and I began to struggle wildly.

I kicked into the darkness, and my foot hit something solid. There was a grunt of pain, and the grip on my throat tightened savagely. The face drew nearer, and there came a roaring in my ears. And I had just given myself up as finished, when a thing happened so staggering that I could scarcely believe my eyes.

Out of the darkness from behind the shining face there came a pair of hands. I could see them clearly—just the hands and nothing more, as if they were disembodied. There was a curious red scar on the middle finger of the right hand, and the left thumb-nail was distorted. With the utmost deliberation they fastened on the throat of my assailant and began to drag him backwards. For a while he resisted; then quite suddenly the grip on my throat relaxed. Half insensible I sank down on the floor, and lay there watching. For the moment my only coherent thought was relief that I could breathe again, that the yellow face was going. Writhing furiously, its mouth twisted into a snarl of rage, it seemed to be borne backwards by those two detached hands. And even as I tried foolishly to understand what it all meant, there came from down below a well-known voice: "The more we are together." The relief was too much. I fainted.

I CAME to, to find the whole bunch regarding me by the light of candles.

"Look here, little man," said Drummond, "what merry jaunt have you been up to this time?"

"How did you know I was here?" I asked.

"The landlord's son told us you'd borrowed his bicycle," he answered. "And since they all seemed very alarmed at the pub., we thought we'd come along and see. We found your machine outside, and then we found you here unconscious. What's the worry? Have you seen a ghost?"

"Seen and felt it," I said, grimly. "A ghastly shining yellow face, with fingers like steel bars that got me by the throat. And he'd have killed me but for a pair of hands that came out of the darkness and got him by the throat as well."

They looked at me suspiciously, until Jerningham suddenly peered at my neck.

"Good Lord!" he said, "look at the marks on his throat."

I laughed irritably.

"You don't imagine I dreamed it, do you? The thing that attacked me had a grip like a man-trap."

"Tell us again exactly what happened," said Drummond, quietly.

I told them, starting with my conversation with the old gentleman that afternoon. And when I'd finished he whistled softly.

"Well done, Dixon; well done! It was a darned sporting thing to come here alone. But, laddie, don't do it again—I beg of you. For, unless I'm greatly mistaken, but for our happening to arrive when we did your only interest by this time would have been the site for your grave."

He lit a cigarette thoughtfully.

"Phosphorus evidently on the man's face who attacked you. An old trick. Probably our headlights alarmed them, and the owner of the hands dragged him off. So that there are at least two unpleasing persons in this house beside us.

"Splendid! At last we come to grips. Blow out those candles, boy; there's no good advertising our position too clearly. And then I think a little exploration of the old family mansion."

Once more we were in darkness save for the beam of Drummond's torch. He had it focused on the floor, and after a while he stooped down and examined the marks in the dust.

"What an extraordinary track!" he remarked. "There doesn't seem to be any sign of footmarks. It's one broad smear."

We crowded round, and it certainly was a most peculiar trail. In width about eighteen inches to two feet, it stretched down the middle of the passage as far as we could see. And suddenly Drummond turned to me with a queer look in his eyes.

"You say this face seemed to be about on a level with your chest?" he said.

"Just about," I answered. "Why?"

"Because it strikes me that you've had even a narrower escape than we thought," he remarked. "The thing that attacked you hadn't got any legs. It was a monstrosity—some ghastly abnormality. The owner of the pair of hands dragged it after him, and that's the trail it left."

"It's a jolly house," murmured Darrell. "What does 'A' do now?"

"What the deuce do you think?" grunted Drummond. "'A' follows the trail, and for the love of Mike don't get behind the light."

Now I don't suppose I should ever have thought of that. I could see Drummond in front, his right arm fully extended, holding the torch, while he kept over to the left of the passage. Behind him, in single file, we all of us followed, and, once when I drifted over to the right, Sinclair, who was just behind me, pulled me back.

"If anyone shoots," he muttered, "he will shoot at the torch. Keep in line."

And the words had hardly left his mouth when there came an angry phut from in front of us, and a splintering of wood from behind. Simultaneously Drummond switched off the light. Silence, save for our heavy breathing—and then once again did I hear that ominous slithering noise.

"Look out!" I cried. "That's the thing moving."

Then came Drummond's voice, sharp and insistent.

"Light. Give me light. My God! what is it?"

And never to my dying day shall I forget the spectacle we saw when Darrell's torch focused and steadied on Drummond. The thing was on him—clawing at him—a thing that looked like a black sack. Its hands were fastened on his throat, and it was by his throat that it was supporting itself. Because it had no legs—only two stumps. It was mouthing and gibbering, and altogether dreadful. Some faint luminosity still remained on its face, but in the light of the torch it was hardly noticeable.

The dust was rising in little eddies as Drummond moved, carrying the thing with him. Of its almost superhuman strength no one knew better than I, and in a few seconds the veins were standing out on Drummond's forehead. Then he braced himself against the wall and gripped its wrists with his hands. I could see the muscles taut and bulging under the sleeves of his coat, as he tried to wrench the thing's hands away from his throat. But, in spite of his enormous strength, he told me afterwards that but for the knowledge of a certain ju-jitsu grip by which a man's fingers can be forced open, the thing would have throttled him unless we had helped. As it was, help was unnecessary: the murderous hold relaxed, and, with a heave, Drummond flung the thing away from him. It landed on the floor with a thud, and for a space it stood there balancing itself on its hands and glaring at us. Then, like some great misshapen ape, it disappeared up the passage, moving on its hands and stumps.

"GOOD LORD!" grunted Drummond, "what a little pet!"

"Where's the gun, Hugh?" said Darrell, curtly.

His torch was flashing on the empty passage.

"Put it out, Peter," snapped Drummond. "I'm thinking that gun belonged to the other bloke. We'll follow up in the dark."

And then, before we had gone two steps, there came from in front of us a loud crash, followed by a terrible scream. The scream was not repeated; only a low moaning noise could be heard, and after a while that also ceased.

We crept forward, guided by momentary flashes of Drummond's torch. The trail was easy to follow. It led along the passage for about fifteen yards, and then turned to the right through an open door.

"Stop here," said Drummond, quietly. "I'm going in alone."

And just as little details about him had struck me before, so on this occasion did the almost incredible swiftness and silence of his movements impress my mind. One instant he was there, the next he was not; but no sound had marked his going.

We clustered round the open door, waiting. Once a board creaked inside, and then suddenly we heard a startled exclamation, and Drummond rejoined us.

"There's something pretty grim happened," he muttered. "Stand well away from the door. I'm going to switch on the torch."

The beam flashed on, and outlined against it was the ominous silhouette of a revolver held in his other hand. And for a space the two remained motionless: then the revolver fell to his side.

"Great Scott!" he muttered. "Poor brute!"

The crash and the scream were accounted for, also the silence that had followed.

Lying motionless on the floor close to the farther wall was the thing that had attacked him. And it needed no second glance to see that it was dead. There was a dreadful wound in the head; in fact, it was split completely open.

For a while we stared at it stupidly—the same thought in all our minds. How had it happened? Because, save for the motionless figure on the floor, the room was empty. What was it that had struck the poor brute this ghastly blow in the darkness? Nothing had come out of the door, and the only window was boarded up.

IT was a peculiar room with stone walls and a stone ceiling, and what it could have been used for in the past completely defeated me. Let into the wall near which the body was lying were six iron rings. Except for them, the walls were absolutely bare. They were fixed in a straight line about a yard from the floor, and were three or four feet apart. And below each ring the boarding was worn away as if it had been gnawed by rats. "Didn't the landlord say that the farmer who was murdered kept savage dogs?" said Darrell. "He used those staples to chain them up."

"Maybe he did," said Drummond, grimly.

"But there ain't any dogs here now, Peter, and what I want to know is what killed that poor brute."

Once again we fell silent, staring at the twisted body.

"He looks as if he had been bashed over the head with a steam-hammer," said Jerningham at length. "That crash we heard was it."

"Yes," cried Drummond. "But what caused the crash?"

He took a step or two towards the body, and even as he did so there came to me an idea. What made me think of it I don't know; what made me suddenly remember my conversation with the old gentleman that afternoon I can't say. But the fact remains that mercifully I did.

It was the remark he had made to me that had first caused me to suspect him. I could see him, even as I stood there, giving me that strange, penetrating stare and saying—"Was it fifth or sixth? It might make a lot of difference." And the dead thing was lying between the fifth and sixth ring.

"I think I've got it," I said, slowly. "It's part of the clue I was given this afternoon, and up till now I'd forgotten it."

They listened while I told them, and when I'd finished Drummond nodded his head.

"You're probably right," he said. "Let's work on the assumption, at any rate."

"That's all very fine and large," grunted Darrell. "But we don't want the same result. And it strikes me that if you make a mistake you won't make a second."

"I've got to chance it, Peter," answered Drummond, doggedly. "If Dixon is right, we're on the track of the next clue. And nothing matters except getting that. Let's think for a moment. What's the natural thing to do when you see a ring in a wall? Pull the blamed thing, isn't it?"

"Probably what that poor brute was doing when he was killed," said Sinclair.

"Then I will pull it, too," announced Drummond, calmly,

"For Heaven's sake, man," cried Jerningham, "what's the use?"

"That remains to be seen," said Drummond. "But we're going to pull those rings—and we're going to pull 'em now. Toby, go back to the car with Algy. Keep close together going through the house. In the tool-box you'll find my tow-rope. Bring it. And don't forget that there is at least one unconsidered little trifle loose in the house.

"If I'm right," he went on as they left the room, "the danger must lie close to the wall. That thing never moved with a wound like that in his head; he died on the spot where he was hit. Anyway, one must take a chance."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH WE EXPLORE THE MERE.

At last, after what seemed an interminable time, Sinclair and Longworth returned with the rope.

"See anyone?" said Drummond, casually.

"Not a soul. But I thought I saw a gleam of light from one of the top rooms."

"Probably our friend of the gun. Give me the rope, and let's get on with it."

He walked across to the fifth ring and slipped the rope through it. Then he stepped back, and we breathed again. Nothing had happened so far.

"Stand clear," he said. "I'm going to pull."

He gave a tug on the rope, and the next instant it was wrenched out of his hand. Some huge object had flashed downwards through the beam of his torch and landed with a sickening thud on the dead man, tearing the rope out of Drummond's grasp as it fell. Instinctively he turned the light upwards. In the ceiling was a square black hole, and we had a momentary glimpse of a face peering at us through it. Then it was gone, and we were left staring upwards.

It was Drummond who recovered himself first.

"A booby-trap that I like not the smell of," he said, savagely. "Keep that hole in the ceiling covered, Ted, and shoot on sight."

It must have weighed a couple of hundredweight—the slab that had come out of the ceiling. There was a staple let into the centre of it, with a wire rope attached, by which it had evidently been hoisted back into position the first time. One could see the faint outline of some sort of winding gear, but of the man who had operated it there was no sign.

"No—I like not the smell of it," he repeated, grimly. "It's murder—pure and simple. But if the swine think they're going to stop us they're wrong."

"What's the next move?" said someone.

"See what happens when we pull the sixth ring," he said. "If what Dixon said is right, that's the other important one."

"Probably the floor will give way this time," remarked Algy Longworth, gloomily. "I feel I should like a mother's soothing comfort."

We waited tensely while Drummond again adjusted the rope. He began to pull, and suddenly he gave a triumphant exclamation.

"It's moving."

It was: a crack was appearing in the wall. And then with a faint creak the whole block of stone swung round on a pivot, leaving an opening about three feet wide and six feet high.

"The poor brute was looking for that, I suppose," said Drummond, "and in the darkness pulled the wrong ring."

He crossed the room, and then stopped abruptly. He was staring at a piece of paper fastened to the back of the part that had moved.

"WELL done, little man," he read, slowly. "Any casualties yet? But you've still got a long way to go, and I've got some far better jests for you before you've finished. Incidentally the charming gentleman without any legs is an impromptu turn as far as I am concerned. I found him on the premises when I arrived, and he struck me as being quite in keeping with the general character of the house. I rather think he must be the so-called ghost, and I do hope he's behaved himself. But if he hasn't, don't blame me. His predilections seem quite delightfully murderous, and he resents any intrusion terribly. But doubtless somebody loves him. Phyllis is still quite well, though just a leetle off her food. Isn't this fun?"

"Damn the woman," said Drummond, angrily. Then he began to laugh. "Though, 'pon my soul," he went on, "if it wasn't for Phyllis, I think I should agree with her."

"Time enough for that, old boy, when we're through," said Jerningham. "Hasn't it struck you that at the moment we're in a rather bad strategical position? It's a sitting shot either from the ceiling or through that opening."

"You've said a mouthful, Ted," agreed Drummond. "Back into the passage, and we'll have a council of war."

The moon had risen, and an eerie half-light was filtering through the dirty windows.

"Now, then," said Drummond, "let's get down to the meat juice. I should think that what our one and only Irma says is right, and that the poor devil dead in there has been responsible for all the stories about this place. Probably used that phosphorus trick to frighten people. Anyway, he's out."

"But the thing to decide is where is the next clue?"

"The betting is a pony to a dried pea that it's down that secret passage."

"Then down the passage we go, old son. But not all of us. If this was an ordinary house I wouldn't mind. But that darned booby-trap in there was specially prepared, and there are probably others. The question is how many of us go. I think three are enough. That leaves three to guard this end. Just guard this end, you three," said Drummond. "And you'd better give us a couple of hours at least."

He stepped back into the room, and flashed his torch up at the hole in the ceiling. No sign of anyone, and he led the way across the floor to the opening in the wall.

"Don't forget," he whispered, urgently, "that anything may happen."

"I won't," I assured him, and wondered if a ton of masonry on one's head was a comparatively painless death.

THE passage led downwards, and the walls and ceiling gradually grew damper and damper, until large drops of water spashed on my head at each step I took forward. Drummond was in front with his torch, and progress was slow, as he tested every foothold he took before advancing. At length he paused, and waited for us.

"I believe we're under the mere," he announced.

Once more we crept forward, and at length the passage started to rise again. It seemed to be bending right-handed the whole time, and was getting drier and drier. Suddenly Drummond paused; we had come to a fork. To the right a flight of stone steps led upwards; to the left it continued on the level.

"Shall we try the steps first?" whispered Drummond, and the next instant he switched off his torch. For quite distinctly and from close to had come the sound of a woman's voice.

"It can't be possible that we've found her," he breathed.

"What—your wife?" I muttered.

"No—the other," he answered. "Supposing she didn't expect us to track her so quickly, and we've caught her up!"

Once again came the voice, and this time a man spoke too.

"It's up the steps," said Drummond. "Toby—you wait here; we may be putting our heads straight into it. If anything happens, sprint back to the others and tell them. Dixon—you come half-way up as far as the bend."

I crept up behind him, feeling with my fingers on the walls. And suddenly I found Drummond's hand on my arm.

"Stay here," he whispered. "I'm going on alone."

Not two yards in front of us a beam of light shone out from under a closed door.

I waited tensely, crouched against the wall. Could it be possible that we had run this woman to earth—that she was on the other side of the door? And, if so, how many men were likely to be with her? True, we had only heard one voice, but that meant nothing.

"Put your hands on the table—both of you," snapped Drummond.

WITH a crash Drummond flung open the door and stepped into the room.

A man and a woman were sitting at a table, on which the remains of a meal were lying. Two candles guttered in the sudden draught, and with a cry of fear the woman rose to her feet.

"Put your hands on the table—both of you," snapped Drummond.

"Who are you?" said the man in a surly voice, his eyes fixed on the revolver. "And what the devil do you want?"

"A little conversation, my friend," said

Drummond. " In the first place—who are you ? And who is the lady ? "

He flashed his torch on her face, and

stared at her intently. She was a haggard, unkempt woman. Her face was lined and wrinkled : her hair streaked with grey. And she looked most desperately ill.

" Never you mind who we are," said the man, angrily. " It ain't no business of yours, is it ? What are you doing in this house, anyway ? "

" I admit," answered Drummond, pleasantly, " that in normal circumstances you would have a certain amount of justification for your question. But you can hardly call this house normal, can you ? "

" Are you the police, mister ? " said the woman, speaking for the first time.

"I am not," said Drummond. "I've got nothing to do with them."

"Well, what do you want?" said the man again. "Are you one of the bunch who have been fooling round this house for the last few weeks?"

"We get warm," remarked Drummond. "No—I am not one of the bunch. At the same time, though not of them—I am after them, if you get me. But for them I should not be here. Am I to take it, then, that you disown them also?"

"Disown them!" the man snarled. "For two pins I'd have murdered the lot."

"Then it was not you who rigged up that pleasant little booby-trap?"

"What booby-trap? Look here, mister, I'm getting fair sick of this. For God's sake clear out!"

The woman put a restraining hand on his arm and whispered something in his ear. She seemed to be trying to pacify him, and after a time he shrugged his shoulders and stood up.

"Sorry, sir, if I lost my temper. But if you ain't the police, and you ain't one of that bunch, then what do you want?"

"One moment," said Drummond. "Dixon," he called over his shoulder.

"Look here," he whispered as I joined him, "would you recognize the hands of the man who dragged that thing away from you?"

"I certainly should," I answered. "And it's not this bloke."

He nodded. "Good. That's one thing settled, anyway. Now," he resumed, "I'll tell you what we want. Hidden somewhere in this charming country mansion is a piece of paper or a letter or a message of some sort which I am looking for. Do you know where it is?"

The man looked at the woman, and she looked at him.

"I reckon I do," he said. "And it's in a place you'd never find if you looked for ten years."

Drummond's eyes never left his face.

"How do you know where it is?" he said, quietly.

"Because I saw one of them people put it there," answered the man.

"Will you show me where it is?" continued Drummond.

Once again the woman bent and whispered.

"All right," he said. "Look here, sir, I'll show you where it is, if you'll give me your word that you won't tell a living soul you've seen us here."

And suddenly the truth dawned on me.

"I believe," I whispered to Drummond, "that this is the man who murdered the farmer ten years ago. They've been hiding here ever since."

"Are you the man who murdered Farmer Jesson?" shot out Drummond, abruptly.

"Never you mind who I am," he said angrily. "You've forced your way in here and I've got to trust you. But unless you give me your word to say nothing, you can look for that envelope yourself."

"I give you my word," said Drummond.

"What about your friend?"

"I speak for all of us," said Drummond. "Now lead on. But you'd better understand one thing, my friend. Any monkey tricks, and you'll be for it good and strong."

The man looked straight at him.

"Why should there be any monkey tricks?" he remarked, quietly. "All I want is to see the last of you as soon as possible. Follow me."

HE took a lantern off a nail in the wall and lit the candle inside. Then he led the way down the stairs.

"Who's this?" He stopped suspiciously as the light showed up Toby Sinclair.

"A friend of mine," said Drummond. "My promise covers him."

"There's someone else about here, Hugh," said Toby, in a low voice. "While you've been up there I've seen a gleam of light along the passage to the left."

Drummond turned to the man.

"Do you hear that?" he said, curtly. "Who is it?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask me another. This place has been like a darned rabbit warren lately."

"Which way do we go?"

"Along there," he pointed, "where your friend says he saw the light."

He stood there swinging his lantern. By its light I could see Drummond staring at him intently: was it or was it not a trap? The man's face was expressionless; he seemed completely indifferent as to whether we went or whether we didn't. And at last Drummond made up his mind.

"Lead on," he ordered. "But don't forget I'm just behind you, and there will be no soft music to herald the hitting."

Certainly there was no further gleam of light from in front, and the feeble flicker of the candle only seemed to intensify the surrounding darkness. The passage itself was opening out a little and the roof was higher, so that walking was easy. And we must have gone about thirty yards when we came to a heavy wooden door. It was open, and our guide passed through without any hesitation.

"The note is in this room," he said, holding the lantern above his head. By its light we could see it was of a similar type to the one we had just left. There were a table and a couple of chairs, and the whole place

smelt of disuse and reeked of damp. Water dripped from the ceiling and the walls, and it struck me that, wherever we had been before, we were now most certainly under the mere.

" Well, get it," snapped Drummond. " This place stinks worse than a seaside boarding-house."

" It isn't quite so easy to get it," said the man, and even as he spoke I knew we were trapped. A sudden look in his eyes; a scowl that was half a sneer—and then darkness. He had blown out the candle.

" A trap ! " roared Drummond, and from the door the man laughed.

" You poor boobs," came his mocking voice. " You don't know enough to come in out of the wet."

WELL—perhaps that remark was worth it to him: perhaps it was not. It just gave Drummond time to switch on his torch. By its light we saw the door closing, and the fingers of the man's hand round it. And the next instant a shot rang out. For quickness of shooting combined with accuracy I would never have believed it possible: Drummond had plugged him through the fingers. A torrent of blasphemy came from the other side of the door as we sprang towards it; but we were just too late. The bolt clanged home as we got there: we were shut in. And from the other side of the door the blasphemy continued.

At last it ceased, and Drummond bent and picked something off the floor.

' I have here," he said, " the top joint of one of your fingers. The next time I see you, my friend, you shall have it served up as a savoury."

We listened to the retreating footsteps, and he gave a short laugh.

" On balance I think we win," he remarked. " Peter and Co. are bound to find us, and until they do we can think out a few choice methods of cooking fingers."

He flashed his torch round the room: there was no trace of a window. But of one thing there was more than a trace. It stared us straight in the face—a sheet of notepaper pinned in the centre of the wall opposite the door. We crowded round it, and in silence we read the message written in the handwriting we were getting to know so well.

" Will you walk into my parlour ? said the spider to the fly. My dear friend, I grieve for you. This is not your old form at all. But then I always thought, little one, that your resemblance to a bull in a china shop was just a little too pronounced. And this time you've done it. Honestly, I never thought the chase would end quite yet. In some ways I'm sorry. I had one or two beauties left for you. In fact, the next clue is in to-morrow's *Times*, which I now fear you will never see.

" How many of you are there in here, I wonder ? That will be reported to me naturally in due course, but my woman's curiosity prompts me to put down the question now. Because I have taken steps to cover all tracks, and I fear your bodies will never be recovered.

" Good-bye, *mon ami*. What I shall do with Phyllis remains to be seen. Play with her a little longer, anyway, I think."

We stared at one another speechlessly; what on earth did the woman mean—" bodies never recovered " ?

" That's where she's made her blooming error," grunted Drummond.

But his voice didn't carry much conviction.

" Let's have a look at that door," he went on. " There must be some way out."

But there wasn't; the door was as solid as the wall. And it was while we were examining the bolt that a faint hissing noise became audible. Drummond straightened up and stood listening.

" What the deuce is that ? " he muttered. " And where does it come from ? "

Once again his torch flashed round the room. The noise was increasing till it was almost a shrill whistle, and we located it at once. It came from a small circular metal pipe that stuck out about three inches from the wall close by the door. I put my finger over it. The pressure was too great to keep it there. Some gas was being pumped into the room, and the same thought struck us all. There was no ventilation.

" She would seem," said Drummond, calmly, " to have won. Unless Peter arrives in time. Sorry, you chaps."

" What's the gas ? " cried Toby Sinclair. " I used to know something about chemistry."

" Well, I didn't," said Drummond. "And whatever it is it's not likely to be for the benefit of our health."

" Keep the torch on the pipe, Hugh," said Toby, quietly.

He, too, put his finger on the end, then he tasted it and smelt it.

" I wonder ? " he muttered, and his voice was shaking a little. " No smell; practically no taste. Do you fellows mind if I take a chance ? "

" We mind strongly if you don't," said Drummond, calmly. " And do it darned quickly."

Sinclair struck a match. Came a sudden little pop, and from the end of the pipe there shot out a long blue flame.

" I was right," he said, wiping his forehead. " It's carbon monoxide. Another

five minutes and she would have won. As it is, if we take turns at breathing through the keyhole we ought to escape with only a head like the morning after."

"Mother's bright boy," said Drummond, lightly, but I saw his hand rest for a moment on Sinclair's shoulder. "Explain."

"Carbon monoxide, old boy. Don't taste or smell, and you can't see it. One of the most deadly poisonous gases known to science. If you light it, it forms carbon dioxide, which isn't poisonous, but only suffocates. So if, as I say, we breathe through the keyhole in turn, and Peter isn't too long, we ought to get away with it."

IT was a weird scene—almost fantastic. I remember thinking at the time that it simply couldn't be true: that it was some incredible nightmare from which I should shortly wake up. In turn we solemnly stooped down, put our mouths to the keyhole, and sucked in the pure air from the other side of the door. One, two, three; one, two, three—for all the world like performing marionettes.

It was Sinclair who noticed it first, and nudged us both to draw our attention because speaking was ill-advised. The flame was decreasing in size. Now it was burning fitfully; at times it shot out to its original length—at others it almost died away. And then suddenly it went out altogether.

He took a piece of paper from his pocket and a pencil.

"Go on at the keyhole," he wrote. "Don't speak unless it's essential. Room full of carbon dioxide, but no more coming now."

One, two, three—suck; one, two, three—suck, till my back was aching and I cursed Darrell and the others for not coming. Surely to Heaven it must be at least three hours by now since we had left them. And then another ghastly thought struck me. Even when they did come, how were they going to open the door without a key? And there was no key in the keyhole.

Suddenly we all of us paused instinctively. A key had been put in the keyhole. The bolt was turning, and with our heads feeling as if iron bands were fastened round them we stood and watched. Trying not to breathe, and with our lungs bursting for air, we watched the door open. A hand came round the edge—a hand with a curious red scar on the middle finger. It was the man who had dragged the thing away from me earlier in the evening.

I signed furiously to Drummond, but as he said afterwards it was a matter of complete indifference to him whose hand it was. All he wanted was air, and a grip on somebody's throat. He got both, and he was not feeling amused.

He was a big man—the owner of the hand, and he was wearing some form of respirator. He was also a powerful man, but, as I have said, Drummond was not feeling amused. He shot across the room did the owner of the hand, as if he'd been kicked from close quarters by a mule—whilst we shot into the passage. Then, having locked the door and removed the key, we sat down and just breathed. And if anybody is ever in doubt as to what is the most marvellous sensation in the world, they may take it from me that it consists of just breathing—in certain circumstances.

From the other side of the door came the sound of furious blows. He seemed to be hurling himself against it with the whole weight of his body.

"What about it, Hugh?" said Toby. "The respirator he has on is only of use against carbon monoxide."

"Then let him have a whack at breathing through the keyhole," said Drummond, grimly. "Gosh! I wouldn't go through that last half-hour again for twenty thousand quid. Besides, I want my other little pal, and if I can find him he'll eat his finger here and now."

But of neither the woman nor him was there any trace. The room was empty; the birds had flown. And as we stood in the passage at the foot of the stairs that led to the room they had been in, the only sound that broke the silence was the hoarse shouting of the man who was caught in the trap that had been laid for us.

"I think we'll let the swab out," remarked Drummond, thoughtfully. "We might get something out of him."

And it is possible we might have, had not the last little effort in that pleasing country mansion taken place. It was purely accidental, and I was responsible for it. About a yard along the passage beyond the fork a steel bar was sticking out from the wall. It looked strong: it looked quite capable of bearing my weight. So I sat on it, and found it was not capable of bearing my weight. It collapsed under me, and I found myself on the floor. And even as I picked myself up there came from the room we had left a frenzied scream of fear and a strange rushing noise.

Stupidly we stared at the door, focusing our torches on it. From underneath it water was pouring through. From each side, getting higher and higher, it came trickling out, until it shot like a jet from a fountain through the keyhole.

"Run," roared Drummond. "Run like hell. If that door gives we're done. We've let the lake in."

It was true; the meaning of the phrase about the bodies not being recovered was clear at last. We raced wildly along the passage back towards the house. Would the door hold long enough? And it did—by about five seconds. We heard the crash as it gave when we were in the lowest part, and we pounded on up the rise. Behind us came the swish of the water, now pouring unchecked through the open doorway. It came in a wall six feet high along the passage, and like a huge wave breaking on the shore it hurled itself after us two feet above the level of the mere, and then, angry and swirling, receded to its proper height.

SLOWLY we climbed the last bit of the passage and stepped into the room.

" Thank the Lord," said Jerningham, " you're all right. We were just coming to find you, when the most extraordinary upheaval took place in the lake."

Dawn had come, and we followed him to the window outside.

" It's almost died away now," he went on. " But about five minutes ago, right out there in the centre, the water began to heave. Almost like a whirlpool. What's happened? "

" An airy nothing," remarked Drummond. " They've tried to gas us, and they've tried to drown us, and——"

He broke off suddenly, staring across the mere.

" It's a darned difficult light to see in," he said, " but isn't there someone moving over there in the undergrowth? "

Personally I could see nothing, but after a moment or two he nodded.

" There is. I see 'em. Two. Back from the window, boys: this matter requires thought. No one has come out this way, I take it? "

" Not a soul," said Darrell.

" Then," said Drummond to Sinclair and me, " those two on the other side are fish-faced Lizzie and her gentleman friend."

" Shall we round 'em up? " remarked Toby.

Drummond lit a cigarette thoughtfully.

" I think not," he said at length. " Look here—let us consider this matter, because it seems to me that we have come to the parting of the ways. I suppose nobody has a bottle of beer? Bad staff work. However, let us pull ourselves together, and get the grey matter to function."

He sighed profoundly.

" A ghastly hour to do so, but I have the glimmerings of an idea. Now first of all there were in this house four individuals that we know of. First, the legless bird who got a brick on his head. Now it's possible that what she said in her note was right, and that he wasn't one of the party, but just went with the house. Anyway, it doesn't matter, he is out of it."

He held out an enormous finger.

" That's one. Secondly, there's the bloke who pulled him off Dixon, and whose face we saw through the hole in the ceiling. He, dear little chap, is very dead down below there. He's drowned."

Another finger joined the first.

" Since the good-looking lady and gentleman whom we called did not come out this way they must either still be below, or they got out some other way. If they are below they also are drowned; if, on the other hand, they got out——"

" Then they're not," said Algy, brightly.

" There were two people moving on the other side of the mere," pursued Drummond. " So let us assume that the passage continues under the water and comes out in the undergrowth opposite. Further, that those two escaped. What then, my brave hearts—what then? What message of fun and laughter are they going to give to our little Irma? "

He paused triumphantly, and Algy scratched his head.

" Dashed if I know," he burbled.

" The last thing they saw of us," went on Drummond, " was when we were locked in that confounded room with carbon something or other pouring into it. And if old Toby hadn't had a brain storm, that is the last that anyone would ever have seen of us. Do you get me now? For the purposes of this little affair that *is* the last that anyone will see of us."

We sat staring at him, realizing at length what he was driving at.

" By Jove! Hugh," said Darrell, thoughtfully, " I believe that is a thundering good idea."

" I'm certain it is," said Drummond. " Look here," he went on, gravely, " we've seen enough to-night to realize that this isn't a game of kiss-in-the-ring. I confess that I hadn't thought that she would go to quite the lengths she has done. It is by a sheer piece of luck only that one or all of us are not dead now. Don't let there be any mistake about that. She meant to kill us—or some of us. And that gives us a foretaste of what is to come. If she has gone to these lengths in the earlier stages of the hunt, we're going to have the devil's own time later. Well—what's she going to say to herself? She knows us of old. She knows that if we three had been killed, you three would not give up. She'll expect you after her."

Darrell nodded. " Quite right."

" So we'll have the hunter hunted," went on Drummond, cheerfully. " You'll

be chasing clues; they'll be chasing you and we'll be chasing them."

"There's one small flaw in your otherwise excellent scheme," I put in. "How are they to know that the next clue is contained in this morning's *Times?* Only we three saw her message to that effect, and we're dead."

"Darn the man," said Drummond. "He's quite right."

"Let's wait until we see the message," remarked Jerningham. "The thing that must be done at once is for you three to go to ground here somewhere, and for us three to register alarm and despondency. We'll go and search the grounds, and if by any chance we run into your two pals, we'll pretend we're looking for you. Ask them to help, or if they've seen you."

"You're right, Ted," said Drummond. "Go to it. We'll lie up here."

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH WE GET THE SECOND CLUE.

AND so began the second phase in this strange game. I know that I was feeling most infernally tired and yet sleep would not come. My brain was too busy with the amazing happenings of the previous night. Then my thoughts turned to the amazing brain that had planned it all.

And suddenly Drummond spoke half to himself and half to me.

"She means to get us all—nab the whole bunch. She won't rest till she does." Then he smiled a little grimly. "And you thought it was a joke."

"Guilty," I acknowledged. "You must admit, though, that it's a little unusual."

He laughed shortly, and then he began to frown.

"I can stand anything on two legs or on four," he grunted, "but these damned mechanical devices don't give a fellow a chance. And I'm uneasy about those other three. Seems to me we're letting them bear the brunt from now on. She'll concentrate on them."

He relapsed into a moody silence, and I said nothing. There seemed to be nothing to say. What he feared was quite correct, or so it appeared to me.

"What the dickens are we going to do with that body?" said Drummond, suddenly.

"Why not put it into the water," said Sinclair, "and then close the passage up?"

"Not a bad idea. Stoop as you pass the window, in case those two are still outside."

And so we lifted the stone sufficiently to extricate it, and carried it down the passage to the water's edge. We toppled the poor brute in, and beat it for the house. And then we pushed on the sixth ring and the secret door slipped back into position.

Footsteps on the stairs made us step back hurriedly, but it proved to be only the other three returning.

"What luck?" cried Drummond.

"I think we've done the trick, old boy," said Darrell. "We ran into them on the other side—a woman of repulsive aspect and a man with his hand bound up. We were running round in small circles, pretending to look for you. Incidentally, what you thought was right; that passage comes out near a broken-down old ruin on the other side. There was a rusty iron door which they had presumably opened. And when we saw them we told 'em the tale. Asked them if they'd noticed the extraordinary upheaval in the lake, and inquired with the utmost agitation if they'd seen three men anywhere about. Said we'd been ghost-hunting. I don't know if they believed us or not, but I don't see that it matters very much if they did. We never let on by the quiver of an eyelid that we suspected them."

"What did they say?" said Drummond.

"'If your friends have been ghost-hunting,' the man said, 'I fear they've found a very substantial one. My wife and I were out for an early morning stroll, when we suddenly saw the upheaval in the lake. And if you will look down that passage'—he pointed through the opening—'you will see the water. I fear that your friends must have inadvertently found a most dangerous piece of mechanism, which I have heard of often, but never believed to be really existent. Nothing more nor less, in fact, than a diabolical arrangement for flooding the whole of this under-water passage which comes out into the house on the other side. Doubtless you found the opening there.'"

"'We did,' I said, registering horror and despondency.

"'Then if your friends have not come out that end, I very much fear they must all be drowned. For they certainly haven't come out this.'"

"But what happened finally?" demanded Drummond.

"They drifted off, and it seemed to us they were still on the look-out for something. And then it suddenly struck us what it was. It's the other bloke; the one who is drowned down below. So we sprinted back here, in order to prevent them coming, at any rate yet. As there seem to be only the two openings, they're almost bound to come and examine this end as soon as we are gone. And it was going to mess things up a bit if they found all you three here. So what I suggest is this. You three must go to ground in real earnest somewhere. And you must

wait until we give you the ' all clear '—in a day or two, or perhaps a week."

" Go to blazes," said Drummond.

" We in the meanwhile will go and drown our sorrows in beer, and later on we'll bring you the corks to smell. We'll also get a copy of *The Times*, and then will come the problem of smuggling you out of this house unseen. We'll have to discuss that later."

" Right you are, Peter," said Drummond. " You've about hit it. Incidentally, where shall we go to ground ? "

He glanced round, and finally stared at the ceiling.

" That seems to me to be the best spot," he remarked, thoughtfully. " Only how the deuce do we get up there ? A chair on the top of the table and I might reach."

He could—just, and in an instant he had swung himself through the hole and disappeared from view.

" Splendid ! " His face reappeared through the hole. " Plenty of room for all three of us. Come along, Dixon—I'll pull you up."

He got me by the wrists and heaved me up beside him as easily as I would lift a child. And then Toby Sinclair followed.

" Take away the chair and the table, Peter," he said. " And for the love of Allah bring back a dozen with you in your pockets. My mouth is like an asbestos washer."

AND so commenced a weary vigil. A passage, evidently communicating with the rest of the network, led out of our hiding-place, but there was no longer any incentive to explore. All we could do was to sit and wait until the others came back and told us the coast was clear.

Suddenly Drummond sat up and put a finger to his lips. I had heard nothing myself, but, as I had already discovered, all his senses seemed twice as keenly developed as my own. And after a while I too heard a creak on the stairs outside, and then another.

" Not a sound," he breathed. " But if they find us we've got to sock 'em. Keep back from the opening or they may see us."

We drew back so that we could only just see the doorway, and waited. There was someone coming along the passage now, and a moment or two later our friend of the damaged hand put his head cautiously round the corner. Then he spoke to someone behind him.

" All right," he called out. " Come on."

The woman joined him.

" What's the use ? " she said, peevishly. " You're not going to find him here."

" Cut it out," he snarled. " If Jim was in the passage when the door gave with the water he may have escaped up this end, and be waiting inside."

He tugged on the sixth ring, and the secret door swung open once more. Then he disappeared down the passage while the woman leaned against the wall.

" Not a sign." He came back into the room and closed the door. " But those three guys have bunged that madman's body into the water."

He stood in the centre of the room gnawing his fingers.

" I wonder how much they knew ? " he muttered.

" What does it matter what they knew ? " said the woman. " Let's get out of this —I'm fed up."

" You'll get a clip under the jaw in a minute," he remarked. " We're getting a couple of hundred of the best for this job, and you ain't likely ever to earn a couple of hundred pence with a face like yours."

" Well, what is it you want to know ? " cried the woman, irritably.

" Whether those other three guys—the ones that came down to us—are really below there."

" Heaven save the man, where else can they be ? " She stamped her foot. " You got 'em in the room, didn't you ? And you locked 'em in the room, didn't you ? And you turned on the gas, didn't you ? And they were still in the room twenty minutes after. Where else can they be now ? "

" I'd like to have seen 'em," he muttered.

" Well, since you ain't a ruddy fish, you can't," she remarked. " I'm going. I want some sleep."

She paused in the doorway.

" Come on, Bill," she said in a milder voice. " It's clear enough what happened. When Jim pulled the lever he didn't get out quick enough. He got caught by the water, poor old stiff—and he's down there himself now. And so are the other three. Come on ; you ought to have that hand of yours looked at."

" Blast that big fellow," said the man, venomously. " I'd give something to have a once over with him."

The woman laughed shortly.

" You would," she said. " From what I saw of him you'd give up every hope of ever being recognized again. He'd eat you—with one hand. Come on—or I'll fall asleep where I stand. The telegraph-office won't be open till nine, and there's nothing to be done till then. You've got her address, haven't you ? "

" I've got the usual one," he answered, following her from the room.

Their voices died away as they went

along the passage, and I thought the unfortunate Drummond was going to have an apoplectic fit.

"Just as we were getting something useful," he groaned. "An address. *The* address."

"Probably only an accommodation one," said Toby, sleepily. "Wake me if I snore, chaps, but I must have a bit of shut eye."

And still sleep would not come to me. I got into every conceivable position I could think of—I counted innumerable sheep going through a gate; but at the end of an hour I was wider awake than ever. The other two were peacefully unconscious, and at last I gave up trying. It was as well, in any case, that one of us should remain on guard, and so I settled myself as comfortably as I could and waited for the time to pass.

I SHIFTED my position so as to distribute the cramp more evenly throughout my anatomy, and in doing so I saw into the room below. Just the same except that the shadow thrown by the open door had moved as the sun got higher. A simple little problem in trigonometry, I reflected. If the door was eight feet high and the shadow was nine feet long, what was the height of the sun above the horizon? Door over shadow was tangent of the angle. Or was it cosine? Anyway, one would want a book of logarithms. . . . One would want . . .

My tongue grew suddenly dry. The height of the sun above the horizon had nothing to do with the sudden eddy of dust that swirled up in the passage outside. Nor had it anything to do with another shadow that had just appeared—the shadow of a human being.

I glanced round at the other two. They were six or seven feet away: to wake them up would cause noise. Moreover, they were sleeping silently, so it was best to leave them as they were.

Once more I turned back to the room. The shadow had materialized. Standing in the doorway was a woman—one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen in my life. I put her age at about thirty, though it may have been two or three years more. She was, as far as my masculine eye could judge, perfectly dressed—but it was her face, or rather her expression, that held me spellbound. There was contempt in it, and hatred—and yet, mingled with them, a sort of pity and regret. Once her eyes travelled to the bolts in the wall, and she smiled—a lazy, almost Oriental smile. And then she did an extraordinary thing. Still standing motionless, she glanced upwards. Not at me, not at the hole in the ceiling, but as a woman looks up in prayer. The whole expression of her face had changed: there was in it now a wonderful triumph. Her eyes were half-closed; her whole body seemed to relax into utter surrender. And suddenly she spoke:—

"I would have kept him till last, my loved one—but it was not to be. But there are still the other three—and her. After I will come to you."

And then it seemed to me that she took in her arms a head I could not see—and kissed lips that to her were real. Lingeringly, passionately—as a woman kisses her lover. Gradually her arms fell to her side, and for a while she stood with her face transfigured and her eyes closed. Then she drew herself up: the vision had vanished. She gave one more glance round the room and was gone, leaving no trace of her visit save a faint, elusive scent. Jasmine—and yet not quite jasmine—something I could never mistake in the future.

Stiffly, like a man waking from a dream, I moved over to Drummond and shook him by the shoulder.

"What is it?" he said, instantly awake.

"Your friend Irma has been here," I answered, quietly.

"What!" he almost shouted. "Then why the——"

He was standing up in his excitement, but with an effort he pulled himself together.

"How do you know it was she? Tell me about it."

He listened in perfect silence.

"I couldn't wake you without making a noise," I said when I had finished. "And I don't know," I added candidly, "that I could have wakened you anyway. I watched that woman almost as if I had been in a trance. But one thing is certain—she thinks you are dead. Another thing is certain—she is going for the other three. And your wife. And then she will commit suicide."

"You think she's mad?" said Drummond.

"No, I don't think that she's mad. I think she's more dangerous even than that. She's a woman with an obsession—a mission in life. That man she spoke to was real to her—as real as you are to me. He is still her lover—though he is dead. And her mission is to revenge his death."

"Perhaps it's as well he didn't wake you up, Hugh," said Toby, thoughtfully. "You can bet she's covered her traces pretty effectually, and what could you have done if you had caught her? It wouldn't have helped you to find Phyllis. In addition, you'd have given away the fact that you're not dead."

"You may be right," agreed Drummond at length. "But, by Jove! I'd like to have seen her. You'd recognize her again, Dixon?"

It seemed to me that she took in her arms a head I could not see—and kissed lips that to her were real.

"In a million," I said. "And I'd recognize that scent."

He relapsed into silence, his chin sunk on his chest, and for the first time the full realization of what we were engaged in came to me. Before, this woman had been a legendary figure: a writer of would-be flippant letters—a maker of skilfully-devised death-traps. Dangerous certainly—more than dangerous—but with at any rate some idea of making a sporting game of it. I had believed that if we did pull through, if we did follow the clues successfully, she intended to play the game and restore Drummond's wife to him. And I had believed that she proposed to give us a sporting chance of so doing. Now I believed it no longer.

For what chance had we? True, by the most marvellous fluke we had escaped the night before—but flukes cannot continue indefinitely. Sooner or later she would have us, as she had always meant to have us. And the cellar below showed exactly the amount of mercy we should receive.

What chance had Drummond against such an antagonist? I glanced at him, sunk in thought, his great fists clenched by his side. Let him get his hands on anything on two legs—well and good. God help the thing! But this wasn't a question of brute strength: this was a question of cunning and brain.

I wondered if he was even now thinking out some plan of campaign. To meet guile with guile was our only hope, and somehow he didn't strike me as being the right man for that. Something to hit hard and often, and he won in a canter; but first find the thing to hit.

"Gosh! I hope they've brought the beer."

I sighed a little wearily: such was our leader's mentality.

"Doubtless they will when they come," I assured him.

"When they come!" he grunted. "You wouldn't hear a howitzer going off in the next room, laddie. They have come. That flat-footed blighter Algy has fallen over his own feet twice already. Cultivate the old ears, Dixon: in the dark they're worth more to you than your eyes."

HE got up and yawned prodigiously, and as he did so I heard cautious footsteps coming along the passage. The next moment Peter Darrell appeared in the door, followed by the other two.

"All right, Hugh?"

"Thirsty, Peter—darned thirsty. Where's the ale?"

He lowered himself through the hole and dropped to the floor.

"We've got a dozen, old boy. Is that enough?"

"Do you drink beer, Dixon?" asked Drummond, looking up.

"Not usually at this hour of the morning," I answered.

"Thank the Lord for that!" he said in a relieved voice. "It's a most deplorable habit, and I'm glad you don't suffer from it. Incidentally, chaps, you haven't run into Irma by any chance, have you?"

"Well, I'm darned!" Jerningham glanced at Darrell. "Why do you ask, Hugh?"

"Because according to Dixon the poppet has been here, holding spiritual converse with our late lamented Carl. Of course, he doesn't know the darling by sight, and Toby and I were both asleep. But from his account of the interview it must have been her."

He paused with his glass half-way to his mouth.

"Have you seen her?"

"As we were leaving the village, old boy," said Jerningham, "a closed car, going fast, met us. And as we passed it a woman looked out of the window. Peter was driving, and Algy was in his usual condition of comatose imbecility, so it was only I who saw her. I just got a fleeting glimpse, but I thought it was Irma myself. I wasn't sure; but from what you say it must have been. I tried to get the number of the car, but the road is dusty and I couldn't see it. And then, just as I was telling Peter, we went and punctured. Otherwise we could have followed. What did she come here for?"

"To gloat over my corpse, Ted, and to assure Carl that you three weren't forgotten," said Drummond. "She's out for the lot of us."

"Bless her little heart!" remarked Peter. "But she'll have to be a bit more explicit, as far as I'm concerned."

He produced a copy of *The Times* from his pocket and pointed to two verses in the Personal Column. They were headed—"To dear Hugh."

"A lily with the plural put before
A thing of beauty, but in this case, more
Like the fair lady whom you met last night.
When found, at any rate, you'll start quite right.

"Dipped in the river Styx one part alone
stayed dry.
Leave out the next, but take the cry
Of every schoolboy. That should give a man.
And now, you poor fish, find it if you can."

(To be continued.)

BLOOD SPORTS—

Should They Be Abolished ?

"Yes"

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

SIR WILLIAM ORPEN

THE VERY REV. DEAN INGE

SIR GEORGE GREENWOOD

"No"

H. A. VACHELL

A MASTER OF FOXHOUNDS

SIR CLAUDE CHAMPION DE CRESPIGNY

A SPANISH DIPLOMAT

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

I CANNOT persuade myself that we are justified in taking life as a pleasure. To shoot for the pot must be right, since man must feed, and to kill creatures which live upon others (the hunting of foxes, for example) must also be right, since to slay one is to save many; but the rearing of birds in order to kill them, and the shooting of such inoffensive animals as hares and deer, cannot, I think, be justified.

I must admit that I shot a good deal before I came to this conclusion. Perhaps the fact, while it prevents my assuming any airs of virtue, will give my opinion greater weight, since good shooting is still within my reach, and I know nothing more exhilarating than to wait on the borders of an autumn-tinted wood, to hear the crackling advance of beaters, to mark the sudden whir and the yell of "Mark over!" and then, over the topmost branches, to see a noble cock pheasant whizzing down wind at a pace which pitches him a hundred yards behind you when you have dropped him. But when your moment of exultation is over, and you note what a beautiful creature he is and how one instant of your pleasure has wrecked him, you feel that you had better think no longer if you mean to

Photo: Hoppé.

slip two more cartridges into your gun and stand by for another. Worse still it is when you hear that child-like wail of the wounded hare. I should think that there are few sportsmen who have not felt a disgust at their own handiwork when they have heard it. So, too, when you see the pheasant fly on with his legs showing beneath him as a sign that he is hard hit. He drops into the thick woods and is lost to sight. Perhaps it is as well for your peace of mind that he should be lost to thought also.

Of course, one is met always by the perfectly valid argument that the creatures would not live at all if it were not for the purposes of sport, and that it is presumably better from their point of view that they should eventually meet a violent death than that they should never have existed. No doubt this is true. But there is another side to the question, as to the effect of the sport upon ourselves—whether it does not blunt our own better feelings, harden our sympathies, brutalize our natures. A coward can do it as well as a brave man; a weakling can do it as well as a strong man. There is no ultimate good from it. Have we a moral right, then, to kill creatures for amusement? I know many of the best and most kind-hearted men who do it, but I still feel that in a more advanced age it will no longer be possible.

H. A. VACHELL.

I CANNOT conceive of England—Scotland, of course, would suffer a huge financial loss—without sport; no hunting, shooting, and fishing. If some future Labour Government, for instance, abolished these sports, could they turn a deaf ear to other gentlemen, as sincere as those who condemn fox-hunting and shooting (oddly enough, fishing is seldom included), who would abolish the eating of flesh, fowl, and fish, the drinking of tea, coffee, and wine, and the use of tobacco? Excellent arguments can be found by all our "faddists" in support of their particular fad. The great argument against Protection is that it must apply to all or none. Would not the same argument apply to any sustained movement to abolish sport? Hitherto public opinion has dealt faithfully enough with such sports as bear-baiting, bull-fighting, cock-fighting, and pigeon-shooting. Public opinion, and that alone, may do away with the sports that are left to us. Only Time can tell, and Time keeps many surprises up his sleeve.

What is the effect of sport on sportsmen? That, perhaps, might be debated in the Albert Hall before an immense audience. Speaking personally, and being admittedly an enthusiast on field sports, I believe with whole-hearted conviction that sportsmen, taking them as you find them, are a splendid lot of fellows. I admit that a man who gives his undivided energies to sport, who is deaf and blind to anything else, is not an admirable person, but such fanatics are few and far between, thank God! Sport to most of us means the open air, sunshine and rain, heat and cold, all the vicissitudes of our unstable climate; it means endurance, patience, good temper, and, best of all, companionship. There is a rigorous etiquette of sportsmanship, and I pity the man who flouts it. Certainly he is not regarded as a sportsman. There is a spice of danger always, more than a spice if a man rides straight to hounds or goes out shooting with novices. Every fisherman risks his life when he wades deep into heavy water, with a slippery bottom beneath his brogues! And the dangers incidental to health, exposure (lying on wet heather in a blizzard waiting for a stag to rise), over fatigue, liability to chill—these must be confronted valiantly.

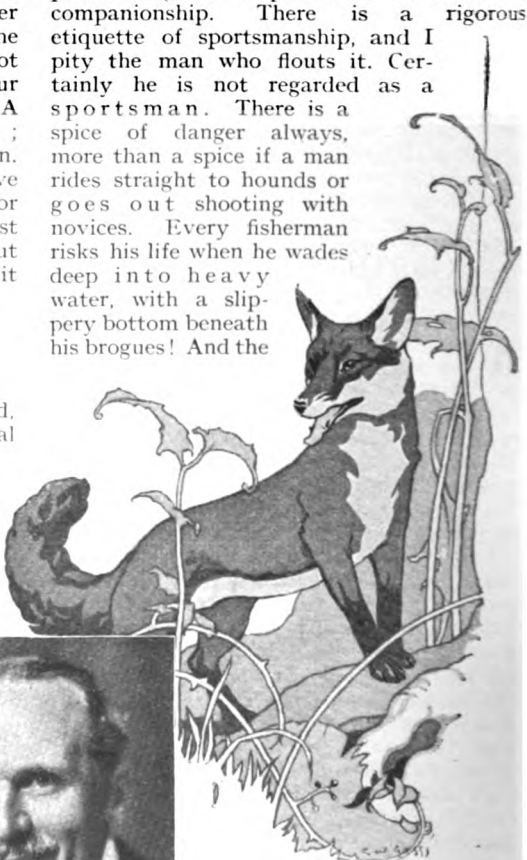


Photo: Lenare.

I contend that sport exercises, with rarest exceptions, a sane and beneficent influence upon sportsmen. I repudiate with indignation, as ill-founded and not proven, that sportsmen are less humane, let us say, than minor poets. Is a poetaster to be executed because his verses inflict pain upon lovers of poetry? Sportsmen suffer abominably from misrepresentation. As a rule they are men of action, not of words; they suffer fools gladly.

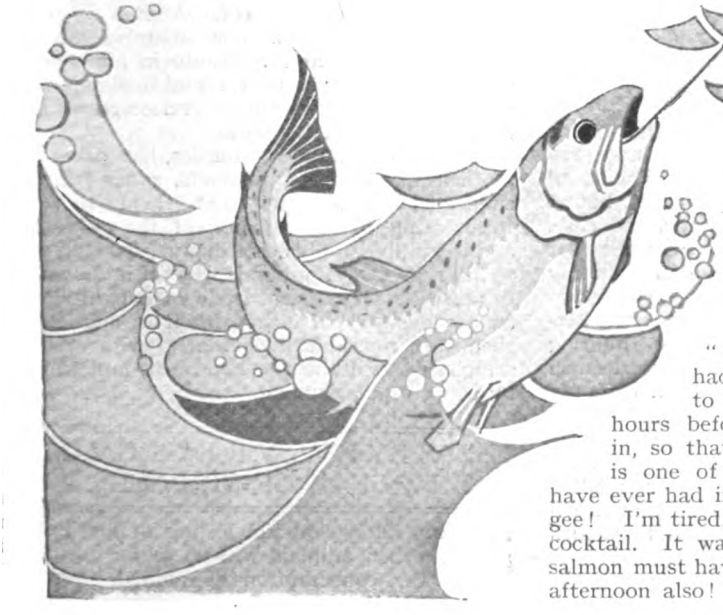
In conclusion, I would ask if this movement against killing God's creatures applies to the consumption of cheese? Eating one inch of a ripe Stilton condemns to a (possibly) lingering death thousands of inoffensive animals. They perish as the Philistines did of yore—and often under the same weapon.

SIR WILLIAM ORPEN.

Photo: Foulsham & Banfield.

I HAVE lived a great deal with so-called "sportsmen," who all profess to love animals. Oh, yes! They adore them, they talk and dream of nothing else, they live with them and for them, but for the most part, as far as I could see, their only reason was that they could kill them at the end. Yes, they will take endless trouble to bring their animals up in the best possible way. See them care for a brood of pheasants! Weeks and weeks of care, and they would cry if one of the dears got ill or egg-bound, or if any other terrible thing like that should happen to them, but when the time comes they up with a gun and slaughter the whole blinking lot "for sport."

That's "cricket." Why, the Massacre of the Innocents was merely child's play in comparison. Those men of yore did not rear innocent babies, and wait and wait for the moment when they were ripe for slaughter, just for the joy of the "kill." They, poor fellows, were only obeying orders, and most probably hated the job. Don't think for one moment that I do not know that sportsmen preserve game—birds, foxes, and such-like animals—of course they do; but why? Because they can, when the right time comes, hunt them to death in a most cruel manner, or blow their beauty to bits with a gun. It makes me sick even to think of it.



Then take the fisherman. I can hear one of them say over his third cocktail before dinner: "What an afternoon I've had! Got into a beauty, had to play him for three solid hours before he gave up and came in, so that Jock could gaff him. It is one of the greatest afternoons I have ever had in my life. Glorious! But, gee! I'm tired. I think I deserve another cocktail. It was real grand sport." The salmon must have had a deuce of a pleasant afternoon also! I expect he felt awfully

" bucked," until he got a bang on the head, or was drowned in the air.

So one can go on, through all the hunting or slaughtering " sports." They are all cruel, and have no love of animal life in them, yet these people who hunt and slaughter are our so-called " sportsmen." I suppose the cannibals of old, who used to fatten up young men and women for their feasts, had the same idea, but I have never heard them called " sportsmen," or that they were playing " cricket." But I suppose they really were, to their own minds at least.

A MASTER OF FOXHOUNDS.

PROBABLY the most important fact which is overlooked by those who would drive foxhounds and hunters from the Shires is the number and variety of trades and industries that would be seriously, some fatally, affected by the abolition of hunting.

Fox-hunting is in itself an industry of long standing, with millions of pounds invested in it, affecting wholly or in part scores of minor trades, and it is as well for those who attack it on ethical grounds to recognize that it can frame a stout defence on economic grounds.

England is hunted at present by upwards of two hundred packs of foxhounds. Hardly a county is without its meet. Wherever a pack is maintained it serves as an artery for trade; wherever there is a hunt you will find smiling shopkeepers, for they are assured by its presence of at least six months' better trade than their brother in the non-hunting district. It makes possible their continuance in rural places where, at other times of the year, some of them are hard put to it for a living.

I have seen it stated that fox-hunting is responsible for a capital turnover of ten million pounds a year. It is difficult to know how this figure was arrived at, but at least it by no means overstates the case. If it embraces all the business channels that receive life from the sport, it is certainly underestimated.

In a hunting county, such as Leicestershire or Northamptonshire, the hunting season is budgeted for by local tradesmen as a guaranteed tenfold increase in turnover for the period. The village shop, the main town " emporium," the local inns, hotels, and caterers, the village and town halls (used for hunt balls), the farriers, smiths, saddlers, and vets, these are tributaries fed annually by the river of England's wealth that flows to their doors.

For them, however, fox-hunting is but a valuable asset. What of the many to whom it means existence itself?—not only the kennelmen, grooms, huntsmen, stable boys, and others in like employment, but the large body of sadly-impoverished landowners who rent their houses to wealthy sportsmen at rentals that enable them to pay their crushing rates and live in moderate comfort for the year. If fox-hunting were abolished to-day, half the grand old places of the hunting counties would be up for sale to-morrow!

Town dwellers, and it is mostly from their ranks that the criticisms are heard, would do well first to inquire into the feelings of country folk, who are really the people to decide the life or death of the sport. They would learn how, were it not for fox-hunting, the horse-breeding industry would die in a year. Corn and hay merchants would go out of business by the hundred (remember the Leicestershire cornchandler who recently bought six hundred acres in East Anglia for twelve thousand pounds—all from fox-hunting!); and in a less degree the bootmakers, tailors, hatters (to say nothing of the farm hands who pick up comfortable little tips opening gates!) would suffer immense loss.

Finally, at a time when " Come to Britain " is launched as a national slogan, why talk of depriving this country of perhaps her greatest attraction in the eyes of foreign visitors? Millionaires of every country in the world are to be found in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire during the season. Their coming brings trade to a needy nation; their departure carries to their own lands tales of our sport, scenery, hospitality, and good cheer. After a single season each of them becomes an ambassador and publicity agent for Britain in his own country. Can we, in short, afford to dispense with the little hold we thus exercise upon the holiday-makers of the world?

The anti-fox-hunting fanatics, like others of their " reforming " instincts, suffer from singleness of thought. Let them leave fox-hunting to the opinion of the public, and it will live or die accordingly. To strive to kill it on ethical grounds when it is shown to possess such immense trade value exhibits an obvious lack of vision, for if we ban it, then we must deal similarly with the slaughter-house and the hen-roost, and end by being vegetarians all.

THE VERY REV. W. R. INGE, C.V.O., D.D., DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S.

IT is not likely that the feeling of kinship with other animals will go so far as to stop the consumption of animal food.

There are some who, like the ancient Pythagoreans, regard the eating of flesh as a kind of cannibalism; but vegetarianism will probably remain a fad of the few. After all, nobody has so much interest in the demand for pork as the pig. What is likely to change is the popular attitude towards field sports. Here we have to deal with a very primitive instinct. Man was a hunter before he was a tiller of the ground, and long before he began to study natural science. Still, the large majority of men in civilized countries get on without hunting, as they get on without fighting and ritual dances. These things may afford a certain purgation of the emotions, as Aristotle would say, and this may account for the exhilaration which they cause; but they are not among the necessaries of life. The killing of birds and beasts for the pleasure of killing them is mainly an aristocratic diversion. No one probably has seen for the first time a hare or pheasant shot without a feeling of pity and disgust; but these are emotions which wear off quickly, and the average sportsman, it may be, is not satisfying his lust for cruelty at all, but merely testing his skill as a marksman. The amusement is supposed to be that of a gentleman, and of a gentleman with means; it is also healthy, giving plenty of exercise in the open air. But in view of what we now know of our relationship to other forms of life, it seems a barbarous and degrading form of recreation. I believe that this view will gain ground steadily, and that the most indefensible forms of sport, such as pigeon-shooting and coursing, will be given up in deference to public opinion. If the Spaniards ever give up bull-fighting, it will be a sign that they are no longer inaccessible to the ethics of science.

The lower animals were not made for our sake. So much science can affirm without hesitation. And it is equally certain that this world was not made for our sake. During the last few thousand years out of the two thousand millions during which the globe has been in existence, an insignificant fraction of the life of the planet, our species has become dominant on the land, though, be it remembered, not below the surface of the sea. During the last few thousand years we have been able to enslave, kill, and eat all those of our fellow-creatures whom we could use in these ways; and we have done it ruthlessly. Whether the tyranny of mankind over the world will go on for ever, none can tell. We may perish by mutual extermination, or some new microbe may make an end of us, or climatic changes may drive us out of a great portion of our present abodes. On the other hand, we may evolve, both physically and mentally, in ways which no one can predict. Meanwhile the lower animals, if they could devise a religion, would certainly represent the devil as a great white man!

SIR CLAUDE CHAMPION DE CRESPIGNY.

SPORTSMEN are usually disinclined to enter controversies of this kind for two reasons. Firstly, it is useless to tell the supporters of our manly sports that which they already know, and secondly, nothing they can say will convince the insignificant minority of faddists, principally from the suburbs, of the great advantage those sports are to the country.

One silly writer wrote me that all fox-hunters were *cowards*, an indictment that would include the first Duke of Wellington, the seventh Earl of Cardigan, the two brothers Charles and William Beresford, and the two V.C. Field-Marshals, Sir G. White and Sir Evelyn Wood, surely a fairly useful crowd of "cowards."

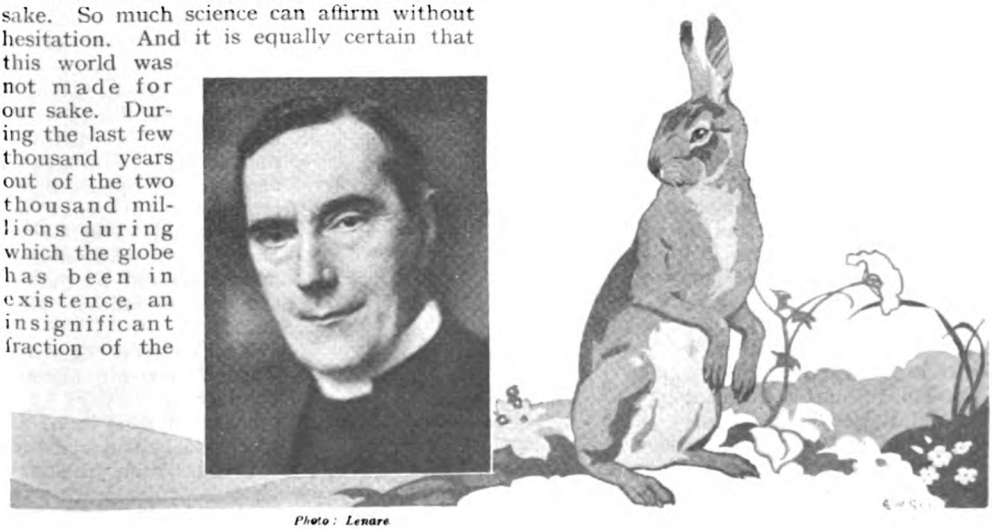


Photo: Lenare.

It is only the "Law of the Forest" that a fox should be killed by an animal stronger than itself. A lion that dies of old age has a poor time and is as likely as not to be finished off by hyenas or jackals when *in extremis*, to say nothing of vultures. If wolves had not been exterminated foxes would probably have been killed by them. As it is, hounds only serve out the same medicine to the fox as it administers to the fur and feather on which it preys. It is significant, incidentally, that the best men to hounds make the best leaders in war.

Too much money is already spent out of England; abolish hunting and shooting, and how many more millions would be spent beyond our shores on shooting and fishing, say, on the coasts of Florida, California, and New Zealand (it was off the latter a friend of mine wrote a few months ago, saying that he had killed a sword-fish weighing five hundred and seventy pounds, about four times his own weight!). Abolish our field sports and many thousands would be thrown out of employment, and there would be no counter-attractions to induce foreigners to spend money in this country.

SIR GEORGE GREENWOOD.

(For twenty years a member of the Council of the R.S.P.C.A., Sir George Greenwood has two Parliamentary Bills for the defence of animals to his credit, namely: "The Diseases of Animals Act, 1910," and "The Protection of Animals Act, 1911.")

THE question put to me is: whether in my opinion "blood sports," such as hunting and shooting, should or should not be abolished.

Let us take hunting first. Here I have no difficulty in answering, for I have long held as an indisputable axiom that no man and no woman ought to seek or find pleasure in hunting an animal to death. That appears to me an unanswerable proposition. Judging the matter, as it must be judged, from the point of view of ethics, whether the animal be fox, or deer, or otter, or hare, or rabbit, or some other, I can only say that, in my opinion, to hunt it in order to kill it, *for sport*, is unjustifiable. All these "sports" involve cruelty, or sometimes excessive cruelty; and, as Schopenhauer wrote more than sixty years ago: "There is nothing that revolts our moral sense so much as cruelty."

Photo: Elliott & Fry.

Nevertheless, it would, of course, be foolish and untrue to say that all men and women who follow the hounds are cruel; "for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so," and we must recognize that these "sportsmen" and "sportswomen" have not yet learned to think sufficiently to realize the wrong they do. Either, as in the great majority of cases, they have not thought about the matter at all, or they have, unconsciously and unfortunately, allowed their pleasure to leave their reason in the background.

No doubt many supporters of such blood sports as fox-hunting will defend them on the economic grounds of the great number of people they keep employed. Such an argument is no case at all, as it applies equally to bull-fighting, which most Englishmen—fox-hunters included—regard with abhorrence and disgust.

I noted that Dean Inge, in his Norman Lockyer lecture, delivered before the British Science Guild, is reported as having uttered the following words: "The ethical implications of Darwin's discoveries in the origin of species have hardly yet been fully recognized, and the certainty that the lower animals are literally our distant cousins ought to make some change in our attitude towards them."

All humane men will surely welcome such words as these, more especially as coming from a dignitary of a Church which has not hitherto made itself conspicuous as a protagonist in the cause of our cousins of the animal world. But the Dean was anticipated some seventeen years ago by Thomas Hardy, who wrote in *The Humanitarian* of May, 1910: "Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is *ethical;* that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals, by enlarging, as a necessity of rightness, the application of what has been called 'The Golden Rule' from the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom."

These are "golden words" for all humanitarians; yet if "the common origin of all species" had never been "established," as it has been to-day, I would still say with Schopenhauer that the sacred instinct of "compassion"—and, as

he said, "animals also are included under its protecting ægis"—lies at the basis of any true system of ethics, and that my axiom, as stated above, still holds good and irrefutable.

When, however, we come to consider the sport of shooting it seems to me that the question presents no little difficulty. All humane men will agree in condemning the barbarities of the "battue," but, putting that aside, if we are not all prepared to become "vegetarians," and to give up eating grouse and partridges and woodcock, and some other birds generally welcomed on the dining-table, such birds must be killed, and the most humane way of killing them is by the gun. And far better would it be to put an end to all the shocking barbarities of the slaughter-house, and all its horrible accompaniments, and with them to give up the eating of beef and mutton and veal, than to banish from the table the birds habitually killed by the "sportsman's" gun for human food.

"But," cries the vegetarian, "there is no such alternative. Away with the accursed thing, and confine your banquet to the kindly fruits of the earth."

Well, far be it from me to say that he is wrong. The day may yet come when man shall recognize the surpassing beauty of that imaginary olden time of which the poet has sung; when:—

"*Man walked with beast, joint tenant of the shade;*
The same his table, and the same his bed;
No murder cloth'd him, and no murder fed."

But, alas, I fear that the day is still afar off in the dim and distant future.

A SPANISH DIPLOMAT.

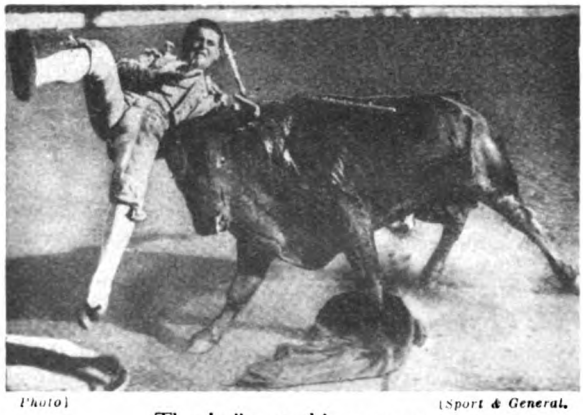
IN countries where bull-fighting plays no part in national amusement, the Press is usually so unanimous in decrying this ancient sport of Spain that it is rare for a Spanish enthusiast to be given the opportunity of expressing the opinions of most of his countrymen.

First, let me say that I have on many occasions attended bull-fights in company with Englishmen, who have begun by expressing horror at the unfortunate fate of the gored horses, but have ended by thoroughly enjoying the spectacle of rare skill and daring that follows.

Now in the matter of the horses the Englishman is no louder in his criticism than is the average Spaniard. And it is owing to public opinion on this regrettable side of our sport that the Government recently held a competition to obtain ideas from the public on how best the horses might be guarded from the first mad rushes of the bull. A protective device covering chest and abdomen is now in use, by order of the Government, which will greatly lessen the horses' casualties.

"Why not dispense with horses altogether?" say the critics. For the reason that, without the serious wounds first inflicted on the bull by the mounted bull-fighters, it would be quite impossible for any human being to slay the monster. Make no mistake about that. Any pity expended on the bull is wasted, as all who have witnessed his furious attacks on the toreador will agree. The sympathies of all who attend bull-fights, of whatever nationality, are all for the intrepid fellow who walks alone into the ring to do combat with his raging adversary. The bull is too terrible, too fearful a foe ever to inspire pity; while, on the other hand, the daring skill and lightning play of the toreador can only evoke the utmost admiration in all who love adventurous spirits.

Figures are sometimes quoted in defence of bull-fighting to show what a disastrous effect its abolition would have upon the trade of Spain. I submit that bull-fighting requires no such defence. It is in itself the most thrilling sport engaged in by modern man, and as a spectacle has no equal the world over.



[Photo] [Sport & General.

The bull gets his revenge.

I have often heard English sportsmen declare that a sport is valuable to those who follow it in direct ratio to its risk to life and limb. If that be true, then the world's finest sport must surely be that of my own country, for in comparison with its risks those of hunting a fox, climbing the Alps, or shooting a tiger are practically negligible.

Lucky Ann

By

WILLIAM FREEMAN

Illustrated by
G. W. GOSS

GEORGE MICKLEFORD read the post-card and passed it to Muriel. Muriel read it and passed it to Aunt Emmeline, who passed it to Bill. And Bill flicked it to Peter, and Peter jerked it towards Violet, and when they had all read it, Ann, who was niece to George and Muriel and Aunt Emmeline and cousin to Bill and Peter and Vi, saw the card too.

It was headed simply, "*Southampton*," and ran, "*Arrived here Thursday. Hope to be at the Larches Saturday evening.—L.M.*"

"L" stood for "Lemuel." It was an unusual name, but Uncle Lemuel, now returned to England, had been an unusual boy. Running away to sea when he was fifteen, he had lived abroad for nearly thirty years. None of the present generation of Micklefords had ever seen him; even to George and Aunt Emmeline he was only a vague recollection.

"The return of the jolly old prodigal," said Peter.

"Hope he brings the jolly old fatted calf with him," said Bill.

"Hush!" said his mother.

"After all, we're his only living relations," said George. "There's nothing unreasonable in expecting him to——"

"To what?" said Ann.

"Assist the family," said her uncle.

"And if he does it in time for the summer sales," said Vi, "he's got *my* blessing."

"Here's a man coming up the path," said Aunt Emmeline. "Probably one of those horrible people who persuade you to buy Family Bibles or sewing machines on the instalment system."

The visitor had reached the front door. They heard the prolonged "tr-ll-ll!" of the bell.

"See what he wants, Ann," said Muriel; "and tell him to go away."

Ann went. A square-shouldered, rather shabbily-dressed man confronted her.

"This is the Larches, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes," said Ann.

"Mr. Mickleford at home?"

Ann said "Yes" again.

"I'd like to see him," said the man.

"What name?"

"Same as his—only Lemuel instead of George."

"Oh!" gasped Ann, "then you're——"

She got no farther. The dining-room door had been left ajar, and the Mickleford hearing was notoriously acute. There was an excited rush into the hall, and hand-shakings all round.

"Changed my mind after I wrote," Uncle Lemuel explained, "and caught the last train to London."

"And the first one here this morning, hey?" said George. "Well, I needn't say you're welcome."

"I'll make some fresh coffee at once," said Muriel.

"What about the jolly old luggage?" said Peter.

"I left it in the cloak-room. Didn't know how far I'd have to walk, and there wasn't a taxi at the station."

"Of course," said George, "you'll stay with us—at any rate for the present?"

"Of *course*," said Aunt Emmeline. "We should never forgive ourselves if we let you go away again and stay at some wretchedly expensive hotel."

"The Larches isn't the Ritz," said George, "but it *is* a home."

"All this," said Uncle Lemuel, "is mighty kind and friendly. Especially to a chap who's really a stranger."

"I remember your eyes quite well," said Aunt Emmeline.

Uncle Lemuel grinned.

"In the last photo I've seen of *you*, you're a skinny little beggar of six, with long pig-tails."

"Aunt Emmeline *skinny!*" giggled Violet.

"Come along, before the coffee gets cold," said Muriel, returning.

An hour or so later Uncle Lemuel was

taken by George and Muriel to see the garden. It was not an exhaustive inspection, being little more than a stroll up the main path to the summer-house at the end. A mild air stirred the budding branches of the lilac, and the lawn was very green and fresh.

"Comfortable crib you've got here," said Uncle Lemuel.

"There's disadvantages," said George. "And the worry of trying to keep up the house on an inadequate income isn't the least of them."

"Then why not move into a smaller house?"

"The solution isn't as simple as that," said Muriel, quickly. "To begin with, the house, in the strictly legal sense, doesn't belong to us. It belongs to Ann."

"Ann?"

"Yes. Five years ago she went as companion to an old lady named Hanworth. It was a trying position in some respects, but it wasn't as though Ann were our own child, though she's lived with us since her father died, and there were the other children to be thought of."

"Bill, for instance," said George. "Some of those little sketches of his are clever enough to be hung in the National Gallery."

"And in the end, when the old lady died, which she did last August, it was found that she'd left Ann this house and two hundred a year."

"And then what happened?" said Lemuel.

"Then," said George, "I had a bright idea. Here was a big house, far too big for a mere child of twenty-three, and not the kind which could be profitably let or sold. Not, at any rate, without considerable expense. And here were we, cramped in a wretched little villa in a wretchedly unfashionable suburb——"

"And Violet having trouble with her tonsils," said Muriel. "And Bill with all his genius being wasted, and Peter, poor boy, needing a decent room he could use as a study—you've no idea what journalism is nowadays, Lemuel!"

"And Emmeline," added George. "Not *really* strong. I'm stressing these things, old man, because I want you to realize that we took a course that was not only obvious, but absolutely essential."

Lemuel nodded. "What about your own job of work, George?"

"Dear Lemuel," said Muriel, "how quaint you are! That's the first time I've ever heard an administrative position in the Stationery Office, such as George held, referred to as a 'job of work.'"

"'Held?' Do you mean he's chucked it?"

"George retired two months ago. His

The Mickleford hearing was notoriously acute. There was an excited rush into the hall, and handshakings all round.

pension is quite ridiculously small, but the railway journey from here to Town every day so upset his nerves and digestion that it was really the only thing to do."

"And now you've been bored with the entire family record," said George, "what about getting back to the house? I expect you'll want to send for your luggage."

"Very sound idea. I'll walk along to the station after lunch and collect it. Hullo, here's Bill."

BILL was large and loose-limbed. He was also abominably untidy, but excluding his chin, which retreated, distinctly good-looking.

"Care to prowl over my den?" he began, jerkily. "Only if you feel like it, of course."

"Thanks," said Lemuel.

"Shall we come too?" hinted his mother.

Bill swung round. He towered above her.

"I think not," he said, in a tense voice. "Neither of you. The associations are too painful. The last time you came it was with a slab-faced female who sat down on the tube of flake white. And the time before that the pater brought someone from Putney—I've forgotten his filthy name—who wanted to know if I painted by the three-colour process. *No.*" He faced Lemuel, relaxed and amiable again. "A chap has to be firm on these matters, if he's going to keep his head above water."

"And make a splash into the bargain?"

"You've hit it! This way for the studio."

"This is new, isn't it?" said Lemuel, as Bill unlocked the door of an erection that extended from the back of the house.

"Yes. A local builder shoved it up. As I told Ann fifty times—and she agreed with me—there simply wasn't a room in the place fit for a man with a glimmer of temperament. And after all, it was her own property she was improving. What do you think of that?"

They had approached an easel. On the easel was a canvas, on the canvas what appeared to be a rough design for a mosaic pavement, in which the main colour-scheme was emerald green.

"It's—effective," said Lemuel.

"You get the idea, of course? Interior of a lunatic asylum. One patient playing mouth-organ, 'nother patient playing a saxophone. The daughter of the medical superintendent standing between 'em, realizing that when the tune's finished they'll strangle her. At least, that's what I've tried to convey."

"And the title?"

"'Eternal Triangle.'"

"Is that what the superintendent's daughter is supposed to be playing?"

Bill looked at him with an incredulous contempt which made any kind of answer superfluous.

"There's a pile of sketches over there," he said, after a sufficiently impressive silence. "Perhaps you'd like to amuse yourself rooting among 'em?"

Lemuel rooted among them. Occasionally Bill explained, but for the most part he said nothing. It was a relief when Peter appeared on the gravel path outside and beckoned.

Lemuel swung the casement open.

"When Bill's through with it——" Peter began.

"I'm through with it now," muttered Bill, sulkily, from the background.

"All right. What about smoking a gasper in my place?"

"Now?" queried Lemuel.

"Yes, now," said Bill, without waiting for Peter's answer. "Don't slam the door harder than you can help—it shakes the things off the mantelpiece."

Peter's den was reached through a baize door, and overlooked the lawn.

"Jolly comfortable," commented Lemuel.

"Might be worse," said Peter, who was short and inclined to pomposity—a very obvious second edition of his father. "Ann's got her limitations, but her ideas on furniture are fairly sound. Hurl yourself into that chair. You don't happen to have a strangle-hold on a publisher, I suppose? Or even a publisher's reader?"

Lemuel hadn't. "But why?" he asked.

"I've a novel here," said Peter, carelessly, "that I wouldn't mind seeing in print. Most of the critics who've handled it have been rather impressed. 'De Quincey, with a dash of Meredith,' that's how one of them put it. I dare say he exaggerated a bit, but there you are. Care to glance at the first chapter?"

Lemuel made the only possible reply. For the ten ensuing minutes there was no sound in the room save the rustle of pages.

"It's a remarkable effort," he said at last.

"You realize that the whole thing takes place during an acute attack of delirium tremens?"

"I didn't. But of course I ought to have realized it. What's the novel to be called?"

"'Hashish.'"

"Sounds like a noise made by someone whose false teeth don't fit."

Peter, with a swift and furious movement, snatched the manuscript from Lemuel's hand and flung it on the table.

"I imagine," he said, "that you think that's funny? Humorous! Witty! 'Bright Sayings of the Day.' Well, in my opinion, it's——" He broke off. "Sorry. But you've struck the wrong note."

Lemuel, rebuked and humble, escaped. In the hall outside he encountered Aunt

Emmeline. Twenty-five years before, Aunt Emmeline had gone to see a play in which the heroine was a clinging, tender little thing, and the man who had been Aunt Emmeline's escort had unwittingly done the cruellest thing in his life. For he had told her that she and the heroine were as alike as two peas — and had been believed. It was a standard up to which Aunt Emmeline had been trying to live ever since and she was now forty-eight.

There were things she yearned to confide to Lemuel; she confided them now. She spent twenty minutes doing it, and he listened, and said "Really?" "Hard luck that!" and "I say, that *was* rough," and so on. He was still sympathizing when Violet came to tell him that lunch was ready.

"Me for a good time! After all, a girl's only got one life to live."

Violet was seventeen. She had left school; there had been talk of her getting a post in an insurance company or a bank, but so far nothing had materialized. She herself was in no hurry. "Hours nine-thirty till six, a fortnight's holiday in the summer, and about twenty-five bob a week to start with—*that's* the trap I'm expected to walk into," said the youngest Miss Mickleford, frankly, to Lemuel. "Well, it can stay baited for a bit longer. Later on, if I can't get that job on the stage that I'm hankering for—and I've been told that I've a better voice than most, and I've been promised an audition—I may be persuaded to nibble at the cheese. But till then—me for a good time! After all, a girl's only got one life to live."

From which Lemuel didn't dissent.

He set off for the station rather later than he had intended. The delay was more or less strategic: he didn't want an escort, and the surest method of avoiding one was to wait until the family was otherwise occupied.

But he left Ann out of his calculations—which was odd, seeing that he had been thinking a good deal about her.

Ann was tallish, and if she weren't careful would acquire a stoop. She was also slim, and had a clear complexion and a humorous mouth. Her nose was just a nose, but her eyes were jolly. He overtook her on the outskirts of the High Street, the Larches being a mile from the shops and a mile and a half from the station.

"Hullo!" said Ann, and blushed rather absurdly.

"I'm rather — glad — of this," panted Lemuel. He had been hurrying, and the High Street runs uphill. "As a—matter of fact——"

"Wait until I've ordered to-morrow's dinner," said Ann, tactfully, and vanished into a butcher's, leaving Lemuel outside to regain his breath.

"It's like this," he said, when she emerged again. "You're the only one I haven't had a real heart-to-heart talk with."

"There can't be much left to talk about by now," said Ann.

"There's your own point of view."

"I'm not sure that I've got one. Curtis and Hopgroves don't encourage individuality."

"Who are Curtis and Hopgrove?"

"The mineral-water people who've a factory on the other side of the hill. Didn't Uncle George mention them?"

"He didn't."

"I expect he forgot. I'm typist there."

"Do you like it?"

Ann smiled her faint, whimsical smile, and didn't answer.

"Anyway, with your legacy——" Lemuel persisted.

"I'll admit to a hankering for something a bit different."

"What?"

"Journalism, sort of. Interviews and things. All very trivial, but fun, and not too badly paid. I was actually offered commissions by two or three of the magazines. But it would have meant living in London, and—and in the end Uncle George got me a post in Curtis and Hopgrove's. They pay me two pounds ten a week."

"Hours nine-thirty to six, a half-holiday on Saturday, and a fortnight in the summer?"

"How clever of you to guess!"

"Vi dropped a half-hint this morning."

"Poor old Vi hates the idea of settling down to anything of that sort."

"Bill and Peter would hate it too, wouldn't they?"

"Oh, well, they're different. They've both heaps of talent. And they're frightfully temperamental. You couldn't expect them not to be. Here's the cake-shop. You may come in and help me choose them, if it won't bore you too much."

They went in.

"How about a sugar-almond or so?" said Lemuel, gravitating towards the sweet department. "Or caramels? Or that chocolate-icing?"

"Aunt Muriel doesn't care for caramels," said Ann, wrinkling her forehead. "They're too—too entangling. And Uncle George can't crack sugar-almonds, and hasn't the patience to wait until there isn't anything left to crack."

"Might we have your personal views of the matter?" said Lemuel.

"Me? Well, what I *really* hanker for are peppermint bull's-eyes."

"It's about thirty years since I tasted one," said Lemuel, and incontinently bought a pound.

"We've still to go to the station," hinted Ann, as they came out, "and we shall be late for tea if we don't hurry. Aunt Emmeline always gets a pain if people aren't punctual."

"That's all right," said Lemuel. "I'm cutting the station out of the programme."

"But your luggage——?"

"It can spend another day or so in the cloak-room. I'll get whatever I really need at the outfitters' we passed just now."

"Extravagance!" she scolded him.

"Say that again," said Lemuel, fiercely, halting outside a fruit shop, "and I'll go straight in and buy that big bottle of Carlsbad plums!"

Ann had said it before she could stop herself, and Lemuel walked home with the bottle under his arm.

SUNDAY, as George Mickleford frequently pointed out to his family, was his only day of real rest. No one disputed the statement, Ann because she was too busy, the others because it wasn't worth while.

This Sunday looked like being Lemuel's busy day, as well as Ann's. Every member of the family wanted a private chat with him. Both Peter and Bill made it plain that they were entirely willing to let bygones be bygones. Bill particularly. There was a new art colony in Rome that he wanted to discuss—rather expensive, but a first-class opportunity for any chap with a bit of money who was willing to give another chap with talent but no money a chance of making good.

"It wouldn't run to more than about five hundred a year, either," concluded Bill. "One might even do it on a trifle less. A three years' course there would be a thundering good investment."

Lemuel didn't doubt it.

Peter wanted to discuss the cost of publishing a novel. It appeared that he had met a man who, for a mere seventy pounds, would be willing to take over the whole business of putting "Hashish" on the market.

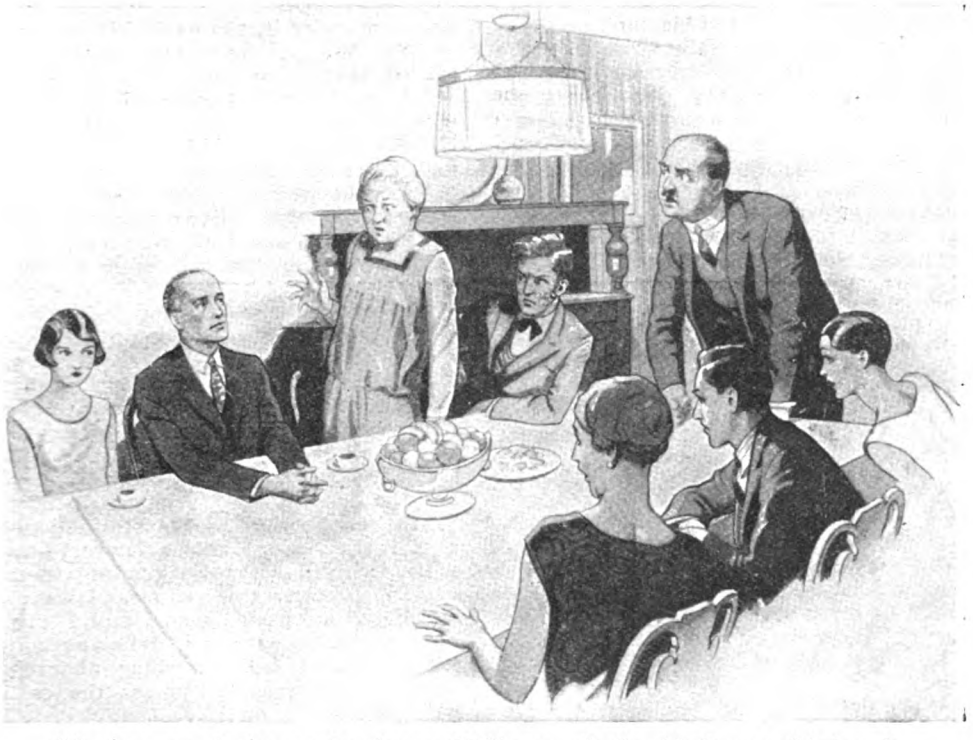
"But, of course," said Peter, "it would have to be a cash down affair. And Ann——"

"What did Ann say?"

"That she simply hadn't got the money. That's all rot, of course—she'd only to sell out a few shares, and the trick would be done. But you know what women are where business is concerned!"

Lemuel knew.

"Well, what about it?" said Peter, who



"Is there any further explanation you'd like to offer," said George, "before I 'phone for the police?"

was younger than Bill, and cruder in his methods.

"I'll talk over the whole position later on," Lemuel promised.

"When?"

"To-night," said Lemuel, "after dinner—as I've told your father and Bill and several other people."

Dinner that evening was a tense affair, the more so because everybody was trying to be hilariously natural. All except, perhaps, Ann, who had worried wrinkles in her forehead. The wrinkles had appeared so often since she had received her legacy that there was a risk of their becoming permanent. As Aunt Emmeline pointed out, the effect of good fortune on the character wasn't always beneficial.

"And now, Lemuel?" said Muriel, when the coffee-cups had circulated.

Lemuel put down his cigarette, and glanced along the line of expectant faces.

"That," he said, deliberately, "is just what I'm not, and never have been."

"Never have been *what?*" said George, puzzled.

"Lemuel. My first name's Robert, and my other name isn't Mickleford."

There was a short, dreadful silence.

"Does this amount to a confession that you're an impostor?" said George, incredulously.

"I'm afraid so."

"Not George's elder brother at all?" said Muriel.

"A swindler, a common thief!" gasped Aunt Emmeline.

"Golly!" said Violet.

"No wonder the blighter had no luggage," said Bill.

George pushed back his chair and stood up. "Is there any further explanation you'd like to offer before I 'phone for the police, Mr.—er——?"

"Vannick's my other name. Yes, there are several other things I'd like to explain."

"Be quick about it, then."

"The first is, I met the real Lemuel, by pure chance, in the train from Southampton, on Friday. He was a returned traveller, and so was I, and there didn't happen to be anyone else in the compartment, and we drifted, naturally enough, into conversation. He'd changed his mind about coming here, and hadn't the smallest objection to my taking his place."

"That," said Peter, "would be dashed amusing—if it happened to be true, which

I doubt. Any objection to telling us why the real Lemuel changed his mind ? "

"Not at all. Especially since he authorized me to tell you. Financially, he hasn't made a success of things. When he bought his ticket home, he'd barely a hundred pounds; by the time he got to Southampton, the hundred had become about forty. Your brother, Mr. Mickleford, knows a good many things, but I guess he doesn't know all there is to learn about poker, as played by a gang of smoking-room sharks."

"Are you one of them, by any chance ? " sneered Bill.

"Shut up, you *cad !* " said Violet.

"Hush, Vi," said her mother.

"Would it be indiscreet to ask if you've any income of your own ? " George asked.

"Very," said Robert Vannick—and left it at that.

AUNT EMMELINE spoke. Her voice had lost its usual tremulous softness. It was harsh and shrill.

"I consider that you've behaved like an unprincipled blackguard, and I only hope you'll be given seven years' penal servitude for obtaining board and lodging under false pretences! What are you muttering, Ann ? "

"N-n-nothing," said Ann, "except that I—I'm so frightfully sorry—and disappointed."

"There's one thing we *can* do," said Bill, "and that's make sure that the blighter doesn't clear out with any of the family jewellery or plate."

"A necessary precaution ! " said Aunt Emmeline.

Robert Vannick stood up.

"It was just an experiment. If it wasn't quite a fair one, I'm sorry."

"An experiment ? " shouted George.

"Hush, dear ! " said Muriel. "He's only trying to excite sympathy, and not worth worrying about. Ann——"

But Ann, with bowed head, had slipped from her seat and from the room.

"Blubbing ! " said Bill. "I saw her. Ann *would*."

"Rot ! " said Vi. "She cleared out to avoid doing the washing-up. I know Ann."

"Finished ? " said George to Robert Vannick.

"Not quite. But I'd prefer to continue the discussion in private."

"No doubt ! " said Peter.

"A more barefaced attempt to work on your feelings, George, I never heard in my life ! " said Muriel.

"If," said George, "we listen to any other statement whatever, it will have to be in the presence of us all."

"Hear, hear ! " said Bill.

Robert Vannick took from his pocket a paper, unfolded it, and handed it to George.

"Some begging appeal or other, I expect," sniffed Aunt Emmeline.

"It isn't," said George. His face had changed oddly.

"Read it, dear," said Muriel.

"It's an alleged will," said George. "Miss Hanworth's. Witnessed by the Parkers, who used to live next door. Dated three days before she died, and leaving all her property to her nephew, Robert Vannick ! "

"If you think we're going to be bluffed by a rotten forgery——" began Peter.

"It's a copy, but not a forgery," said Robert, mildly. "I'm sorry, for your sakes, but Aunt Marian was always a woman who changed her mind pretty often. The original was found between the leaves of the old lady's Bible when her books were sold, and the finder had sense enough to take it to the auctioneers. And the auctioneers sent it to Aunt Marian's lawyers—she'd made the will without consulting them—and the lawyers cabled to me. I was just starting home from Canada, and I cabled back that they weren't to take any action till I'd found out something about the people who'd inherited under the earlier will. Shall I go on ?"

No one answered. He went on.

"I came home, and the other day, as I explained, I met Lemuel. I told him the whole story, left him in London, and came on here."

"And devilish smart you thought yourself ! " snapped Bill. "But what was the idea ? "

"Frankly, to find out whether the old boy's estimate of the family, based on the letters you'd written him, was right. It was."

There was a long, aching silence.

"If—if we spoke heatedly," said George, "I'm sure that we'd every excuse."

"Even now we've only his word——" began Violet.

Robert Vannick cut her short.

"Listen to me—all of you. You insisted on a public discussion. I'm going to wind up with a few home truths about yourselves. You're lazy, that's what's the matter with you, the whole bunch of you. And you've the things that go with laziness—rotten pride, rotten unscrupulousness in battening on other people. In this case it happens to be one person, which makes it several degrees worse."

"Oh ! " said Muriel. "To think that—— If you were a man, George——" She groped for her handkerchief.

"That," continued Vannick, "is why I've no scruples whatever about claiming

my own property. You "—he turned to George—" have your pension. You boys have your professions. If you can't earn enough at them to keep yourselves, earn a living in some other direction."

" B-b-brute ! " sobbed Muriel. " What ab-b-bout poor little Vi ? "

" I'd suggest that she gets one of those nine-thirty-till-six jobs that she's so much contempt for."

" And Ann ? " said George.

" I'm going to talk to Ann," said Robert Vannick, and swung out of the room.

Ann was sitting in the rustic summer-house at the end of the garden. She stood up stiffly as he approached.

" I've told them," he said.

" I wish—I've been wishing ever since you told me this morning that there was some other way."

" There isn't. Ann, believe me, it's the very best thing that could have happened. The whole family was running to seed. I've seen the same thing happen before. I shall give them three months to pack up and clear out, and then another month to settle down, and then I shall come and see you all at your new London address."

" But—but they won't have stopped hating you by then," said Ann, faintly.

" They will, when they find I want to buy one of Bill's pictures, or give Peter a leg-up with his novel. I'm not a rich man, but I'd had better luck abroad than Uncle Lemuel. As for you, my dear, you're going in for journalism."

Ann turned away quickly, so that he shouldn't see her face.

" Good-bye, and thank you."

" I've not quite finished."

" Well ? "

" In a few months' time I shall be forty-six. I'd hate to think that I fell in love when I was forty-five and hadn't pluck enough to tell the girl about it until I was a whole year older. So when I pay that second visit to the family it'll be to make another offer. To *you*. Ann, is it too soon to give me a hint of what the answer's going to be ? "

Ann raised her head. She was smiling.

" If—if you don't mistake the hint for the answer itself," she murmured, and turned away again—foolishly—in case he should see her eyes.

" LOOK ! " gasped Violet. The stricken family had trailed into the drawing-room.

They followed her to the window. It overlooked the lawn and the summer-house.

" Ann always knew which side her bread was buttered," said Muriel, bitterly.

NEXT MONTH—

A New " UKRIDGE " Story

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

P. G. Wodehouse's short stories appear FIRST in " The Strand Magazine "

" UKRIDGE "

Also

" THE MASKED TRINITY "

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By

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PERPLEXITIES.

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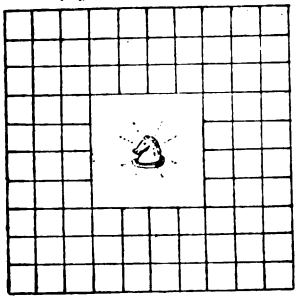
905.—A FRAMED KNIGHT'S TOUR.



I HAVE been reminded that it is a considerable time since I gave a puzzle dealing with a Knight's move, so I recently proposed to myself the following question and found the inquiry very interesting. Place a Knight on any square you choose and trace out with successive Knight moves a complete tour of the eighty-four squares, ending at the starting point and visiting every square once and once only.

906.—A DIGITAL PUZZLE.

CAN the reader give the sum of all the whole numbers that can be formed with the four figures 1, 2, 3, 4? That is, the addition of all such numbers as 1234, 1423, 4312, etc. You can, of course, write them all out and make the addition, but the interest lies in finding a very simple rule for the sum of all the numbers that can be made with four different digits selected in every possible way, but nought excluded.

907.—A HIDDEN PROVERB.

M	M	C	L	R	S
U	O	E	I	N	E
N	C	V	A	M	N
I	T	A	R	R	D
O	I	O	G	O	U
N	S	C	O	T	P

START from any letter that you like in the square and read a very familiar proverb by passing from one letter to another that adjoins it (either laterally or diagonally), until you have visited every square once. For example, if the sentence began "PUT GOAT IN COVE," the reader will find no difficulty in tracing this out if he starts at the P in bottom right-hand corner.

908.—A LEAP YEAR PUZZLE.

THE month of February this year contained five Wednesdays. There is, of course, nothing remarkable in this fact, but it will be found an entertaining inquiry to discover when was the last year and when will be the next year that had, and that will have, five Wednesdays in February.

909.—FLOORING FIGURES.

AN African correspondent writes to me concerning a little curiosity which he has accidentally discovered in making out an invoice with the items:—

148 feet flooring boards @ 2d. .. £1 4s. 8d.
150 feet flooring boards @ 2d. .. £1 5s. 0d.

where it will be seen that in each case the three figures are repeated in the same order. He thought this coincidence so extraordinary that he tried to find another similar case. This seems to have floored him, and readers may like to attempt a solution. I will say that it is possible. You may increase the number of pence if you like, but not use fractions of a penny.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

900.—THE LETTER L

EXCLUDING the corner number, call the four vertical numbers and the four horizontal numbers "groups." In any fundamental arrangement like that we gave, the numbers in a group may be permuted in 24 ways, and in the two groups in 576 ways. As the two groups may change places this makes 1,152 ways, for this one case. If we put 9, 7, 5, 3, or 1 in corner the groups can be paired in 4, 3, 4, 3, 4 (18) ways respectively. If we turn 9 to make 6, then with 8, 6, 4, or 2 in corner we get 3, 4, 2, 3 (12) ways respectively. If we turn 6 to make 9, then with 8, 4, or 2 in corner we get 1, 2, 2 (5) ways respectively. That is 35 ways in all, and $35 \times 1,152 = 40,320$, the required answer.

901.—ANOTHER AGE PUZZLE.

THE man was born in 1856 and died in 1920, aged 64 years. Let x = age at death. Then $29x$ = date of birth. The date of birth plus age equals date of death. So that $29x + x = 30x$ or date of death. Now from the question he was clearly alive in 1900 and is dead now in 1928. So death occurred during or between those dates, and as the date is $30x$ it is divisible by 30. The date can only be 1920, which divided by 30 gives 64. So in 1900 he was 44 years of age.

902.—ECONOMIC CHESS PROBLEMS.

IN the case of Cook's two-mover the solution is, of course, 1. P—Kt 8 (becoming R). A Queen would stalemate. In the case of Loyd's three-mover the solution is 1. P—B 8 (becoming R), 1. K x P; 2. K—B 6, etc. If 1. K—Kt 3; 2. P—R 8 (becoming R), etc. If 1. K—R 3; 2. P—R 8 (becoming Q or R) (ch), etc. If 1. K x R; 2. P—R 8 (becoming Q) (short mate).

903.—A GARDEN PUZZLE.

THE trapezium will be inscribable in a circle. Half the sum of the sides is 29. From this deduct the sides in turn and we get 9, 13, 17, 19, which multiplied together make 37,791. The square root of this = 194.4 square rods will be the area.

904.—WORDS WITH ONE TAIL.

THE words in their order are as follows: DISTEND, PORTEND, SUSPEND, PRETEND, ATTEND, DESCEND, INTEND, CONTEND, OFFEND, EXTEND.

886.—VARIED SPELLINGS.

WITH the aid of many correspondents I can now add the following variations of the sound "a."

aa (graal), a'e (ta'en), ag (champagne), ah (dahlia), alf (halfpenny), ao (gaol), au (gauge), è (cortège), é (café), ee (mêlée), ea (great), ef (chef d'œuvre), eighe (weighed), er (déjeuner), ets (entremets), ette (ricochetted), ez (rendezvous), ha (chaos), hey (whey).

Also, if we admit proper nouns:—

aha (Grahagan), ais (Beaujolais), eaigh (Speaight), eagh (O'Creagh), eay (Reay), es (Duchesne).

Many of these are French but in common English use. If we bar "chaos" because "h" is part of the sound "k," then we ought to have barred "uet" in "bouquet," since the letter "u" is inseparable from the "q."

NEW RIDGE" TORY By P. G. WODEHOUSE

JUN 5 1928

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

THE DREAMERS
By
A. CONAN DOYLE

Life is fun —when you're fit

Bonny, isn't she? Those plump rosy cheeks aren't just angels' kisses! *It's Horlick's.*

Taken every morning it keeps children properly nourished. At bedtime it is an assurance of healthy, growing sleep.

Horlick's Malted Milk is obtainable everywhere at 2/-, 3/6, 8/6 and 15/-; also in tablet form, in glass pocket flasks.

Cafés, restaurants and soda fountains serve Horlick's in many delightful ways — *hot and cold.*

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JUNE, 1928.

"I TELL YOU THE MAN OUGHT NOT TO BE AT LARGE. HE'S A MENACE."

(See page 534.)

UKRIDGE AND THE OLD STEPPER

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
REGINALD CLEAVER

"CORKY, old horse," said Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge, in a stunned voice, "this is the most amazing thing I have heard in the whole course of my existence. I'm astounded. You could knock me down with a feather."

"I wish I had one."

"This suit?—this shabby, worn-out suit?—you don't really mean to stand there and tell me that you actually *wanted* this ragged, seedy, battered old suit? Why, upon my honest Sam, when I came on it while rummaging through your belongings yesterday, I thought it was just something you had discarded years ago and forgotten to give to the deserving poor."

I spoke my mind. Any unbiased judge would have admitted that I had cause for warmth. Spring, coming to London in a burst of golden sunshine, was calling imperiously to all young men to rejoice in their youth, to put on their new herringbone-pattern lounge suits and go out and give the populace an eyeful; and this I had been prevented from doing by the fact that my new suit had mysteriously disappeared.

After a separation of twenty-four hours, I had just met it in Piccadilly with Ukridge inside it.

I continued to speak, and was beginning to achieve a certain eloquence, when from a taxicab beside us there alighted a small, dapper old gentleman, who might have been a duke or one of the better-class ambassadors or something of that sort. He wore a pointed white beard, a silk hat, lavender spats, an Ascot tie, and a gardenia; and if anyone had told me that such a man could have even a nodding acquaintance with S. F. Ukridge, I should have laughed hollowly. Furthermore, if I had been informed that Ukridge, warmly greeted by such a man, would have ignored him and passed coldly on, I should have declined to believe it.

Nevertheless, both these miracles happened.

"Stanley!" cried the old gentleman. "Bless my soul, I haven't seen you for years." And he spoke, what is more, as if he regretted the fact, not as if he had had a bit of luck that made my mouth water. "Come and have some lunch, my dear boy."

"Corky," said Ukridge, eyeing him stonily for a moment and speaking in a low, strained voice, "let us be getting along."

"But did you hear him?" I gasped, as he hurried me away. "He asked you to lunch."

"I heard him. Corky, old boy," said Ukridge, gravely, "I'll tell you. That bloke is best avoided."

"Who is he?"

"An uncle of mine."

"But he seemed respectable."

"That is to say, a step-uncle. Or would you call him step-step? He married my late stepmother's stepsister. I'm not half sure," said Ukridge, pondering, "that step-step-step wouldn't be the correct description."

These were deep waters, into which I was not prepared to plunge.

"But what did you want to cut him for?"

"It's a long story. I'll tell you at lunch."

I raised a passionate hand.

"If you think that after pinching my

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spring suiting you're going to get so much as a crust of bread——"

"Calm yourself, laddie. You're lunching with me. Largely on the strength of this suit, I managed to get past the outer defences of the Foreign Office just now and touch old George Tupper for a fiver. Joy will be unconfined."

"CORKY," said Ukridge, thoughtfully spreading caviare on a piece of toast in the Regent Grill-room some ten minutes later, "do you ever brood on what might have been?"

"I'm doing it now. I might have been wearing that suit."

"There is no need to go into that again," said Ukridge, with dignity. "I have explained that little misunderstanding—explained it fully. What I mean is, do you ever brood on the inscrutable workings of Fate and reflect how, but for this or that, you might have been—well, that or this? For instance, but for the old Stepper I would by now be the mainstay of a vast business, and in all probability happily married to a charming girl and the father of half-a-dozen prattling children."

"In which case, if there is anything in heredity, I should have had to keep my spring suits in a Safe Deposit."

"Corky, old horse," said Ukridge, pained, "you keep harping on this beastly suit of yours. It shows an ungracious spirit which I do not like to see. What was I saying?"

"You were babbling about Fate."

"Ah, yes."

FATE (said Ukridge) is odd. Rummy. You can't say it isn't. Lots of people have noticed it. And one of the rummiest things about it is the way it seems to take a delight in patting you on the head and lulling you into security and then suddenly steering your foot on to the banana-skin. Just when things appear to be going smoothest, bang comes the spanner into the machinery and there you are.

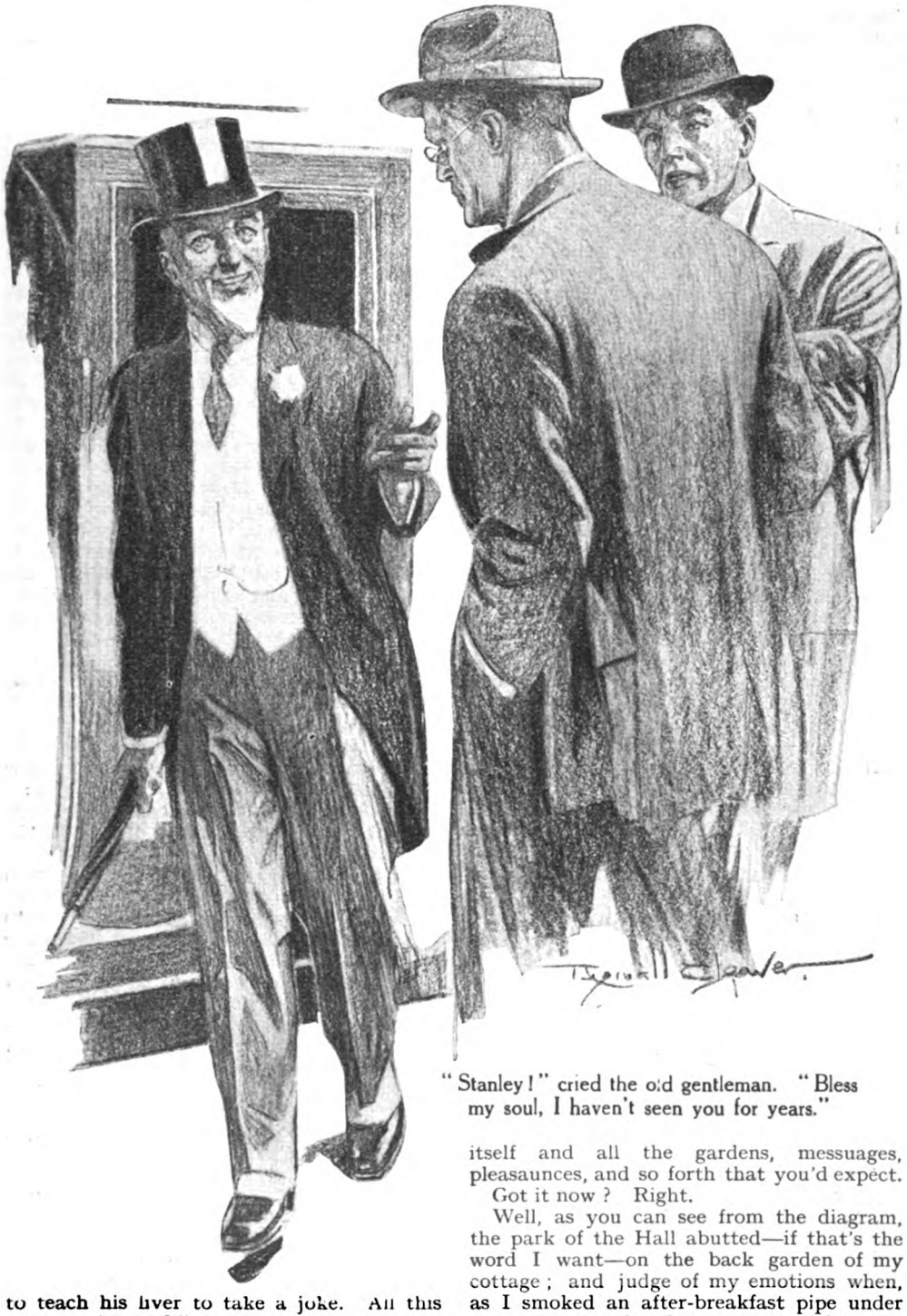
Take this business I'm going to tell you about. Just before it happened, I had begun to look upon myself as Fortune's favourite child. Everything was breaking right in the most astounding fashion. My aunt Julia, having sailed for America on one of her lecturing tours, had lent me her cottage at Market Deeping in Sussex till her return, with instructions to the local tradesmen to let me have the necessaries of life and chalk them up to her. From some source which at the moment I cannot recollect, I had snaffled two pairs of white flannel trousers and a tennis racket. And finally, after a rather painful scene in the course of which I was compelled to allude to him as a pig-headed bureaucrat, I had contrived to get a couple of quid out of old Tuppy. My position was solid. I ought to have known that luck like that couldn't last.

NOW, in a parting conversation on the platform at Waterloo while waiting for the boat-train to start, Aunt Julia had revealed the fact that her motive in sticking me down at her cottage had not been simply to ensure that I had a pleasant summer. It seemed that at Deeping Hall, the big house of the locality, there resided a certain Sir Edward Bayliss, O.B.E., a bird deeply immersed in the jute industry. To this day I have never quite got it clear what jute really is, but, anyway, this Sir Edward was a man to keep in with, for his business had ramifications everywhere and endless openings for the bright young beginner. He was, moreover, a great admirer of my aunt's novels, and she told me in a few and, in parts, tactless words that what I was going down there for was to ingratiate myself with him and land a job. Which, she said—and this was where I thought her remarks lacked taste—would give me a chance of doing something useful and ceasing to be what she called a wastrel and an idler.

Idler! I'll trouble you! As if for a single day in my life, Corky, I had ever not buzzed about doing the work of ten men. Why, take the mere getting of that couple of quid from old Tuppy, for instance. Simple as it sounds, I doubt if Napoleon could have done it. Tuppy, sterling fellow though he is, has his bad mornings. He comes down to the office and finds a sharp note from the President of Uruguay or someone on his desk, and it curdles the milk of human kindness within him. On these occasions he becomes so tight that he could carry an armful of eels up five flights of stairs and not drop one. And yet in less than a quarter of an hour I had got a couple of quid out of him.

Oh, well, women say these things.

WELL, I packed a suit-case and took the next train down to Market Deeping. And the first thing for you to do, Corky, before I go on, is to visualize the general lay-out of the place. My aunt's cottage (Journey's Ende) was here, where this bit of bread is. Here, next to it, where I've put the potato, was a smallish house (Pondicherry) belonging to Colonel Bayliss, the jute-fancier's brother. The gardens adjoined, but anything in the way of neighbourly fraternizing was prevented for the moment by the fact that the Colonel was away—at Harrogate, I learned later, trying



"Stanley!" cried the old gentleman. "Bless my soul, I haven't seen you for years."

to teach his liver to take a joke. All this expanse here—I'll mark it with a splash of Worcester Sauce—was the park of Deeping Hall, beyond which was the Hall itself and all the gardens, messuages, pleasaunces, and so forth that you'd expect.

Got it now? Right.

Well, as you can see from the diagram, the park of the Hall abutted—if that's the word I want—on the back garden of my cottage; and judge of my emotions when, as I smoked an after-breakfast pipe under the trees on the first morning after my arrival, I saw the most extraordinarily pretty girl riding there. Hither and thither.

She came so close once that I could have hit her with an apple. Not that I did, of course.

I don't know if you have ever been in love at first sight, Corky? One moment I was looking idly through the hedge to see where the hoof-beats came from; the next I was electrified from head to foot, and in the bushes around me a million birds had begun to toot. I gathered at once that this must be the O.B.E.'s daughter, or something on those lines, and I found my whole attitude towards the jute business, which up till now had been what you might call lukewarm, changing in a flash. It didn't take me more than a second to realize that a job involving a connection with this girl was practically the ideal one.

I called at the Hall that afternoon, mentioned my name, and from the very start everything went like a breeze.

I don't want to boast, Corky—and, of course, I'm speaking now of some years ago, before Life had furrowed my brow and given my eyes that haunted look—but I may tell you frankly that at the time when these things happened I was a rather dazzling spectacle. I had just had my hair cut and the flannel bags fitted me to a nicety, and altogether I was an asset—yes, old horse, a positive asset to any social circle. The days flew by. The O.B.E. was chummy. The girl—her name was Myrtle, and I think she had found life at Market Deeping a bit on the slow side till I arrived—always seemed glad to see me. I was the petted young neighbour.

And then one afternoon in walked the Stepper.

THERE have been occasions in my life, Corky, when, if I had seen a strange man walking up the path to the front door of the house where I was living, I would have ducked through the back premises and remained concealed in the raspberry bushes till he had blown over. But it so happened that at this time my financial affairs were on a sound and solid basis and I hadn't a single creditor in the world. So I went down and opened the door and found him beaming on the mat.

"Stanley Ukridge?" he said.

"Yes," I said.

"I called at your aunt's house at Wimbledon the other day and they told me you were here. I'm your Uncle Percy from Australia, my boy. I married your late stepmother's stepsister Alice."

I don't suppose anybody with a pointed white beard has ever received a heartier welcome. I don't know if you have any pet day-dream, Corky, but mine had always been the sudden appearance of the rich uncle from Australia you read so much about in novels. The old-fashioned novels, I mean, the ones where the hero isn't a dope-fiend. And here he was, looking as I had always expected him to look. You saw his spats just now, you observed his gardenia. Well, on the afternoon of which I'm speaking, he was just as spatted, fully as gardenia-ed, and in addition wore in his tie something that looked like a miniature Koh-i-noor.

"Well, well, well!" I said.

"Well, well, well!" he said.

He patted my back. I patted his. He said he was a lonely old man who had come back to England to spend his declining years with some congenial relative. I said I was just as keen on finding uncles as he was on spotting nephews. The thing was a love-feast.

"You can put me up for a week or two, Stanley?"

"Delighted."

"Nice little place you have here."

"Glad you like it."

"Wants a bit of smartening up, though," said the Stepper, looking round at the appointments and not seeming to think a lot of them. Aunt Julia had furnished the cottage fairly sparsely.

"Perhaps you're right."

"Some comfortable chairs, eh?"

"Fine."

"And a sofa."

"Splendid."

"And perhaps a nice little summer-house for the garden. Have you a summer-house?"

I said "No, no summer-house."

"I'll be looking about for one," said the Stepper.

And everything I had read about rich uncles from Australia seemed to me to have come true. Spacious is the only word to describe his attitude. He was like some Eastern monarch giving the Court architect specifications for a new palace. This, I told myself, was how these fine, breezy, Empire-building fellows always were—generous, open-handed, gaily reckless of expense. I wished I had met him earlier.

"And now, my boy," said the old Stepper, sticking out from six to eight inches of tongue and running same round his lips, "where do you keep the drinks?"

I'VE always maintained, and I always will maintain, that there's nothing in this world to beat a real bachelor establishment. Men have a knack of making themselves comfortable which few women can ever achieve. My aunt Julia's idea of a chair, for instance, was something antique made to the order of the Spanish Inquisition. The Stepper had the right conception. Men

arrived in vans and unloaded things with slanting backs and cushioned seats, and whenever I wasn't over at the Hall I wallowed in these.

The Stepper wallowed in them all the time. Occasionally he put in an hour or so in the summer-house—for he had caused a summer-house to appear at the bottom of the garden—but mostly you would find him indoors with all the windows shut and something to drink at his elbow. He said he had had so much fresh air in Australia that what he wanted now was something he could scoop out with a spoon.

Once or twice I tried to get him over to the Hall, but he would have none of it. He said from what he knew of O.B.E.'s he wouldn't be allowed to take his boots off, and ran, moreover, a grave risk of being offered barley-water. Apparently he had once met a teetotal O.B.E. in Sydney and was prejudiced. However, he was most sympathetic when I told him about Myrtle. He said that, though he wasn't any too keen on matrimony as an institution, he was broad-minded enough to realize that there might quite possibly be women in the world unlike his late wife. Concerning whom, he added that the rabbit was not, as had been generally stated, Australia's worst pest.

"Tell me of this girl, my boy," he said. "You squeeze her a good deal in dark corners, no doubt?"

"Certainly not," I said, stiffly.

"Then things have changed very much since my young days. What do you do?"

I said I looked at her quite a lot and hung on her every word and all that sort of thing.

"Do you give her presents?"

He had touched on a subject which I had intended to bring up myself when I could find an opening. You see, Myrtle's birthday was approaching; and, though nothing had actually been said about any little gift, I had sensed a certain expectation in the air. Even the best of girls are like that, Corky. They say how old they feel with another birthday coming along so soon, and then they look brightly at you.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Uncle Percy," I said, flicking a speck of dust off his sleeve, "I was rather planning something of the kind, if only I could see my way to managing it. It's her birthday next week, Uncle Percy, and it crossed my mind that if I could stumble on somebody who could slip me a few quid, something might possibly be done about it, Uncle Percy."

He waved his hand in an Australian sort of way.

"Leave it all to me, my boy."

"Oh, no, really!"

"I insist."

"Oh, if you insist."

"My late wife was your late stepmother's stepsister, and blood is thicker than water. Now, let me see," mused the old Stepper, wriggling his feet a couple of inches farther on to the table and knitting the brow a bit. "What shall it be? Jewellery? No. Girls like their little bit of jewellery, but perhaps it would scarcely do. I have it. A sundial."

"A what?" I said.

"A sundial," said the old Stepper. "What could be a more pretty and tasteful gift? No doubt she has a little garden of her own, some sequestered nook which she tends with her own hands and where she wanders in maiden meditation on summer evenings. If so, she needs a sundial."

"But, Uncle Percy," I said, doubtfully, "do you really think——? My idea was rather that if you could possibly let me have a fiver—or say a tenner, to make up the round sum——"

"She draws a sundial," said the old Stepper, firmly, "and likes it."

I tried to reason with the man.

"But you can't get a sundial," I urged.

"I can get a sundial," said the old Stepper, waving his whisky-and-soda with a good deal of asperity. "I can get anything. Sundials, summer-houses, elephants if you want them. I'm noted for it. Show me the man who says that Charles Percy Cuthbertson can't get a sundial, and I'll give him the lie in his teeth. That's where I'll give it him. In his teeth!"

AND, as he seemed to be warming up a bit, we left it at that. I never dreamed that he would make good, of course. You'll admit, I think, Corky, that I'm a pretty gifted fellow, but if anyone called upon me at practically a moment's notice to produce a sundial, I should be nonplussed. Nevertheless, bright and early on the morning of Myrtle's birthday I heard a yodel under my window, and there he was, standing beside a wheelbarrow containing sundial complete as per invoice. It all seemed to me more like magic than anything, and I began to feel like Aladdin. Apparently my job from now on was simply to rub the lamp and the Stepper would do the rest.

"There you are, my boy," he said, dusting the thing off with a handkerchief and regarding it in a fatherly sort of way. "You give the little lady that and she'll let you cuddle her behind the front door."

This struck a slightly jarring note, of course. He seemed to me to be taking an entirely too earthy view of my great love, which was intensely spiritual. But it was not the moment to say so.

"That'll make her clap her hands prettily. That'll send her singing about the house."

"She ought to like it," I agreed.

"Of course she'll like it. She'd dam' well better like it. Show me a wholesome, sweet-minded English girl who doesn't like a sundial and I'll paste her on the nose," said the Stepper, warmly. "Why, it's got a motto and everything."

And so it had. We hadn't spotted it at first, the contrivance having been more or less covered with moss; but the Stepper had worked briskly with a table-knife and now you got a good view of it. Some rot, if I recollect rightly, about ye sunne and ye shoures, carved in old English letters. It seemed to alter the whole aspect of the sundial—lift it, as it were, into a higher and more dignified class; and for the first time I began to get really enthusiastic.

"This is the goods, Uncle Percy," I said. "This is the right stuff. How can I thank you enough?"

"You can't," said the Stepper.

"I'll tell you what the procedure here is," I said. "I'll take this thing over to the Hall this morning and ask Myrtle and her father to come to tea. They can't refuse when they've just been handed a sundial like this."

"Certainly," said the Stepper. "A very good idea. Ask them here to tea, and I'll make the house a bower of roses."

"Can you get roses?"

"Can I get roses! Don't keep asking me if I can get things. Of course I can get roses. And eggs, too."

"We sha'n't want eggs."

"We shall want eggs," said the Stepper, beginning to hot up again. "If eggs are good enough for me, they're good enough for the pop-eyed daughter of a blighted O.B.E. Or don't you think so?"

"Oh, quite, Uncle Percy, quite," I said.

I would have liked to inform him that Myrtle wasn't pop-eyed, but he didn't seem in the mood.

ANY doubts I may have had as to the acceptability of my birthday present vanished as soon as, with infinite sweat, I had wheeled it across the park in its barrow. The Stepper had had the right idea. Myrtle was all over the sundial. I sprang the tea invitation, and for a moment it looked as if there was going to be a hitch. Her Uncle Philip, the Colonel, it seemed, was due to materialize that afternoon. He always made a point of being present for his niece's birthday, however far he had to come to be there, and he would be terribly hurt if he arrived and found she had let him down. What to do?

"Bring him along," I said, of course. And we arranged it on those lines. The Colonel, on getting off the train and going to the Hall, would find a note instructing him to hoof it across the park and come and revel at Journey's Ende. I didn't say so to Myrtle, for the time did not seem to me ripe, but what it amounted to, I felt, was that the Colonel would come seeking a niece and would find in addition a nephew. Than which, for a bloke getting on in years and needing all the loved ones round him that could be assembled, what could be a jollier surprise? I disagree with you, Corky. It does not depend on the kind of nephew. Any nephew is a boon to a lonely bachelor like that.

So I wheeled the wheelbarrow back to the cottage, feeling that all was well. And at about half-past four the maid who came in from the village by the day to do our cooking and washing-up announced Sir Edward and Miss Bayliss.

I'M an old campaigner now, Corky, and Fate has to take its coat off and spit on its hands a bit if it wants to fool me. To-day, when Fate offers me something apparently gilt-edged, I look it over coldly and assume, till it has been proved otherwise, that attached to it somewhere there is a string. But at the time of which I am speaking I was younger, more buoyant, more credulous; and I honestly supposed that this tea-party of mine was going to be the success it seemed at the start.

The thing had got under way without a suspicion of anything in the nature of a disaster. In the first place, the maid had responded to my coaching in the most admirable manner. A simple child of the soil, her natural disposition would have been to bung the door open and bellow, "They're here!" Instead of which, she had done the announcing with a style and polish that gave the whole proceedings a tone from the very outset. Secondly, Sir Edward had not bumped his head against the beam on the ceiling just inside the front door. And, lastly, though the Stepper's roses were present in wonderful profusion, he himself hadn't shown up. And that seemed to me the biggest stroke of luck of the lot.

You see, the old Stepper wasn't everybody's money. To begin with, he had an apparently incurable dislike of O.B.E.'s, and then he combined with a hot-blooded and imperious nature the odd belief that eggs were a suitable food for adult human beings at five o'clock in the afternoon. And he was so touchy, too, so ready to resent opposition. I had had visions of him standing over Sir Edward and shoving eggs down his throat at the point of a table-

Myrtle was all over the sundial.

knife. He was better away, and I hoped he had fallen into a ditch and couldn't get out.

From the moment the first drop of tea was poured everything went as smooth as oil. In recent years, Corky, affairs have so shaped themselves that you have had the opportunity of seeing me mainly in the capacity of a guest; but you can take it from me that, vouchsafed the right conditions, I can be a very sparkling host. Give me a roof over my head, plenty of buttered toast, and no creditors in sight, and I shine with the best of them.

On the present occasion I was at the top of my form. I handed cups. I slid the toast about. I prattled merrily. And I could see the old boy was impressed. These O.B.E.'s are silent, reserved men, and for awhile he just looked at me from time to time in a meditative way. Then, as he was dipping into his third cup of tea, out

he came into the open and began to talk turkey.

"Your aunt. . . . Have you heard from her, by the way?"

"Not yet. I suppose she's very busy."

"I imagine so. An energetic woman."

"Very. All we Ukridges are energetic. We do not spare ourselves."

"Your aunt," resumed the old boy, swallowing some more tea, "gave me the impression in one of the conversations we had before she left England that you were looking out for an opening in the world of commerce."

"Yes," I said. I stroked my chin thoughtfully and tried to look as much as possible like Charles M. Schwab being approached by the President of the United States Steel Corporation with a view to a merger. You've got to show these birds that you've a proper sense of your own value. Start right with them, or it's no use starting at all. "I might accept commercial employment if the salary and prospects were undeniable."

He cleared his throat.

"In my own business," he was beginning, "the jute business——"

Just then the door opened and the maid appeared. She was one of those snorting girls, and she snorted something about a gentleman. I couldn't get it.

"Who's a gentleman?" I said.

"Outside. He says he wants to see you."

"It must be Uncle Philip," said Myrtle.

"Of course," I said. "Show him in. Don't keep him waiting, my good girl. Show him in at once."

And a moment later in came a bloke. Obviously not the Colonel, for Myrtle and the O.B.E. gave no sign of recognition. Then who? The man was a perfect stranger to me.

However, I played the host.

"Good afternoon," I said, affably.

"Afternoon," said the bloke.

"Take a chair," I said.

"I'm going to take all the chairs," he said. "And the sofa, too. I'm from the Mammoth Furnishing Company, and the cheque for the deposit on this stuff has been returned. Refer to Drawer."

It is not too much to say, Corky, that I reeled. Yes, laddie, your old friend tottered and would have fallen had he not clutched at a chair. And, from the look in the bloke's eye, it began to seem that my chances of clutching at that particular chair were likely to be very soon a thing of the past. He had one of those brooding eyes. Two, probably, only there was a patch over the left one. I think someone must have hit him there. A fellow like that could scarcely go through life for long without getting punched in the eye.

"But, my dear old horse——" I began.

"It's no use arguing. We've written twice and never got an answer, and I've instructions from the firm to take the stuff."

"But we're using it."

"Not now," said the blighter. "You've finished."

I LOOK back on that moment, Corky, old boy, as one of the worst in my career. It is always a nervous business for a fellow to entertain for the first time the girl he loves and her father; and, believe me, it doesn't help pass things off when a couple of the proletariat in shirt-sleeves surge into the room and start carrying out all the chairs. Conversation during the proceedings was, you might say, at a standstill; and even after the operations were over it wasn't any too easy to get it going again.

"Some absurd mistake," I said.

"No doubt," said the O.B.E.

"I shall write those people a very stiff letter to-night."

"No doubt."

"That furniture was bought by my uncle, one of the wealthiest men in Australia. It's absurd to suppose that a man of his standing would——"

"No doubt. Myrtle, my dear, I think we will be going."

Then, Corky, I spread myself. On not a few occasions in a life that has had its ups and downs I have been compelled to do some impressive talking, but now I surpassed all previous efforts. The thought of all that was slipping away from me spurred me to heights I have never reached before or since. And gradually, little by little, I made headway. The old boy tried to shake me off and edge through the French windows, but it is pretty hard to shake me off when I am at my best. I grabbed him by the buttonhole and steered him back into the room. And when, in a dazed sort of way, he reached out and took a slice of cake, I knew the battle was won.

"The way I look at it is this," I said, getting between him and the window. "A man like my uncle would no doubt have a number of accounts in different banks. The one on which he drew this cheque happened to have insufficient funds in it, and the bank-manager, with gross discourtesy——"

"Well, yes, possibly——"

"I shall tell my uncle of what has occurred——"

At this moment somebody behind me said "Ha!" or it may have been "Ho!" and I spun round, and there in the French window was standing another perfect stranger.

This new addition to our little party was

"Believe me, it doesn't help when a couple of the proletariat in shirt-sleeves surge into the room and start carrying out all the chairs."

a long, lean, Anglo-Indian-looking individual. You know the type. Beige as to general colour-scheme and rather like a vulture with a white moustache.

"Uncle Philip!" cried Myrtle.

The Vulture gave a kind of nod in her direction. He seemed upset about something.

"Don't talk to me," he said. "I haven't time. Many happy returns of the day and so forth, but don't talk to me now, child. There's the man I want to talk to."

"You know Mr. Ukridge?"

"No, I don't. And I don't want to. But I know he's stolen——" He broke off with a hideous rattle in his voice, and I saw that he was staring at the table. It belonged to my aunt and was the only thing in the room that the shirt-sleeved birds had left, so it was fairly conspicuous. "Good God!" he said.

He switched an eye round and let it play on me like an oxy-acetylene blowpipe. I don't know what the treatment for liver is at Harrogate, but they ought to change it. It's ineffective. It had obviously done this man no good at all.

"Good God!" he said again.

The O.B.E. came to the surface.

"What's the matter, Philip?" he asked, annoyed. He had only just finished coughing, having swallowed a bit of cake the wrong way.

"I'll tell you what's the matter. I was in my garden just now, and I found it looted—looted! That man there has stripped it of every rose I possess. My roses! The place is a desert."

"Is this true, Mr. Ukridge?" asked the O.B.E.

"Certainly not," I said.

"Oh, it isn't?" said the Vulture. "It isn't, eh? Then where did those roses come from? There aren't any rose-trees in the garden of this house. Damn it, I've been here half-a-dozen times and I ought to know. Where did you get those roses? Answer me that."

"My uncle gave them to me."

The O.B.E., having now disposed of the cake, uttered a nasty laugh.

"Your uncle!" he said.

"What uncle?" cried the Vulture. "Where's this uncle? Show me this uncle. Produce him."

"I'm afraid it would be a little difficult to do that, Philip," said the O.B.E., and I didn't at all like his manner. "It appears that Mr. Ukridge possesses a mysterious uncle. Nobody has ever set eyes on him, but it would seem that he buys furniture and does not pay for it; steals roses——"

"And sundials," put in the Vulture.

"Sundials?"

"That's what I said. After I'd had a look at my garden I went over to the Hall, and there in the middle of the lawn was my sundial. They told me this fellow here had given it to Myrtle."

I wasn't in any too good shape by this time, but I collected enough of the old manly spirit to come back at him.

"How do you know it was your sundial?" I said.

"Because it had my motto on it. And, as if that wasn't enough, he's stolen my summer-house?"

The O.B.E. gulped.

"Your summer-house?" he said in a low, almost reverent voice. The spaciousness of the thing seemed to have affected his vocal cords. "How could he have stolen a summer-house?"

"I don't know how he did it. In sections, I suppose. It's one of those portable summer-houses. I had it sent down from the Stores last month. And there it is, standing at the bottom of his garden. I tell you the man ought not to be at large. He's a menace. Good God! When I was in Africa during the Boer War a platoon of Australians scrounged one of my cast-iron sheds one night, but I never expected that that sort of thing happened in England in peace-time."

Corky, a sudden bright light shone on me. I saw all. It was that word "scrounge" that did it. I remembered now having heard of Australia and its scroungers. They go about pinching things, Corky—— No, I do *not* mean spring suits. I mean things that really matter, things of vital import like sundials and summer-houses—not beastly spring suits which nobody could tell you wanted, anyway, and you'll get it back to-morrow as good as new.

Well, be that as it may, I saw all.

"Sir Edward," I said, "let me explain. My uncle——"

But it was no use, Corky. They wouldn't listen. The O.B.E. gave me one look, the Vulture gave me another, and I rather fancy Myrtle gave me a third, and then they pushed off and I was alone.

I went over to the table and helped myself to a bit of cold buttered toast, a broken man.

ABOUT ten minutes later there was a sound of cheery whistling outside and the Stepper walked in.

"Here I am, my boy," said the Stepper. "I've got the eggs." And he began shedding them out of every pocket. It looked as if he had been looting every hen-roost in the neighbourhood. "Where are our guests?"

"Gone."

"Gone?"

He looked round.

"Hullo! Where's the furniture?"

"Gone."

"Gone?"

I explained.

"Tut, tut!" said the Stepper.

I sniffed a bit.

"Don't make sniffing noises at me, my boy," said the Stepper, reprovingly. "The best of men have cheques returned from time to time."

"And I suppose the best of men sneak eggs and roses and sundials and summer-houses?" I said. And I spoke bitterly, Corky.

"Eh?" said the Stepper. "You don't mean to say——?"

"I certainly do."

"Tell me all."

I told him all.

"Too bad!" he said. "I never have been able to shake off this habit of scrounging. Wherever Charles Percy Cuthbertson is, there he scrounges. But who would have supposed that people would make a fuss about a little thing like that? I'm disappointed in the old country. Why, nobody in Australia minds a little scrounging. What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine—that's our motto out there. All this to-do about a sundial and a summer-house! Why, bless my soul, I've scrounged a tennis-lawn in my time. Oh, well, there's nothing to be done about it, I suppose."

"There's a lot to be done about it," I said. "The O.B.E. doesn't believe I've got an uncle. He thinks I pinched all those things myself."

"Does he?" said the Stepper, thoughtfully. "Does he, indeed?"

"And the least you can do is to go up to the Hall and explain."

"Precisely what I was about to suggest myself. I'll walk over now and put everything right. Trust me, my boy. I'll soon fix things up."

And he trotted out, and that, Corky, is the last I ever saw of him till to-day. It's my belief he never went anywhere near the Hall. I am convinced that he walked straight to the station, no doubt pocketing a couple of telegraph-poles and a five-barred gate or so on the way, and took the next train to London. Certainly there was nothing in the O.B.E.'s manner when I met him next day in the village to suggest that everything had been put right and things fixed up. I don't suppose a jute merchant has ever cut anybody so thoroughly.

AND that's why I wish to impress it upon you, Corky, old horse, that that bloke, that snaky and conscienceless old Stepper, is best avoided. No matter how glittering the prospects he may hold out, I say to you—Shun him! Looking at the thing in one way, taking the short, narrow view, I am out a lunch. Possibly a very good lunch. But do I regret? No. Who knows but that a man like that would have been called to the telephone at the eleventh hour, leaving me stuck with the bill?

And even supposing he really has got money now. How did he get it? That is the question. I shall make inquiries, and if I find that someone has pinched the Albert Memorial I shall know what to think.

NEXT MONTH—

"The Passing of Ambrose"

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

P. G. Wodehouse's short stories appear FIRST in "The Strand Magazine"

THE DREAMERS

Notes from a Strange Mail-bag

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Illustrated by
PERCY SPENCE

FOR many years I have been the recipient of as strange a shower of letters as one could imagine. They come from all sorts of folk who have had all sorts of psychic experiences. They demand sympathy, advice, and explanation. The former I can give, but the latter are not always so easy. The handling of this correspondence has added a burden to my already overweighted days, but it is not work which I can hand to a delegate, since very often fine points of knowledge are involved, and the letters are exceedingly confidential and personal. I am glad to think that I have left few unanswered, but it has been at the expense of much energy and time which might, perhaps, have been better employed in some more general fashion. And yet some good end might be attained if I could use them discreetly in order to ventilate in public the various matters discussed.

I have no desire to put forward propaganda which would be out of place in a popular magazine. If the reader likes to treat the cases as instances of delusion or of peculiar mental aberration, that is for his own judgment to decide. I only put forward the letters as being very real facts to those who wrote them. The rest is a matter of individual opinion. From my cabinet of tabulated drawers, I take down the one which is labelled "Dreams," and I pick a few of the contents almost at haphazard.

Here is a very vivid letter from a lady who is herself a musical composer. She dreamed that she was in the presence of a great celestial choir. Her account is an arresting one, and none can doubt that some tremendous impact had been made upon her mind. "The orchestra was of vast size—something like the seating capacity of the Albert Hall. The conductor and the singers were on my right, but after they started playing I realized that they were all round me and there was a great bank of strings up on my left. They were playing what seemed like the end of a classical symphony, and the speed they took it at far exceeded any *tempo* I've heard here. It was like a sea of bows flashing up and down. As I watched them a curious thing happened. It seemed as if the senses of sight and sound merged into one faculty and that I could *see* the vibrations from those violins. You remember the spray mist which hangs over Niagara Falls. Just such a shimmering haze seemed to float above the players. The other thing that struck me was the ideal beauty of the *ensemble*. That mighty host of players was like one thought and action. It so far exceeded anything I have heard here as to be almost overpowering. My own sense of perfection could hardly stretch to it. It was marvellous. Of course, my thoughts are continually on music and rehearsals, so that itself would not convey much, but this idea of seeing sound vibrations had never entered my conscious thoughts, and that is the most vivid impression of the dream."

Though the lady did not know it, the idea of the close connection between colour and sound is one which has frequently come to

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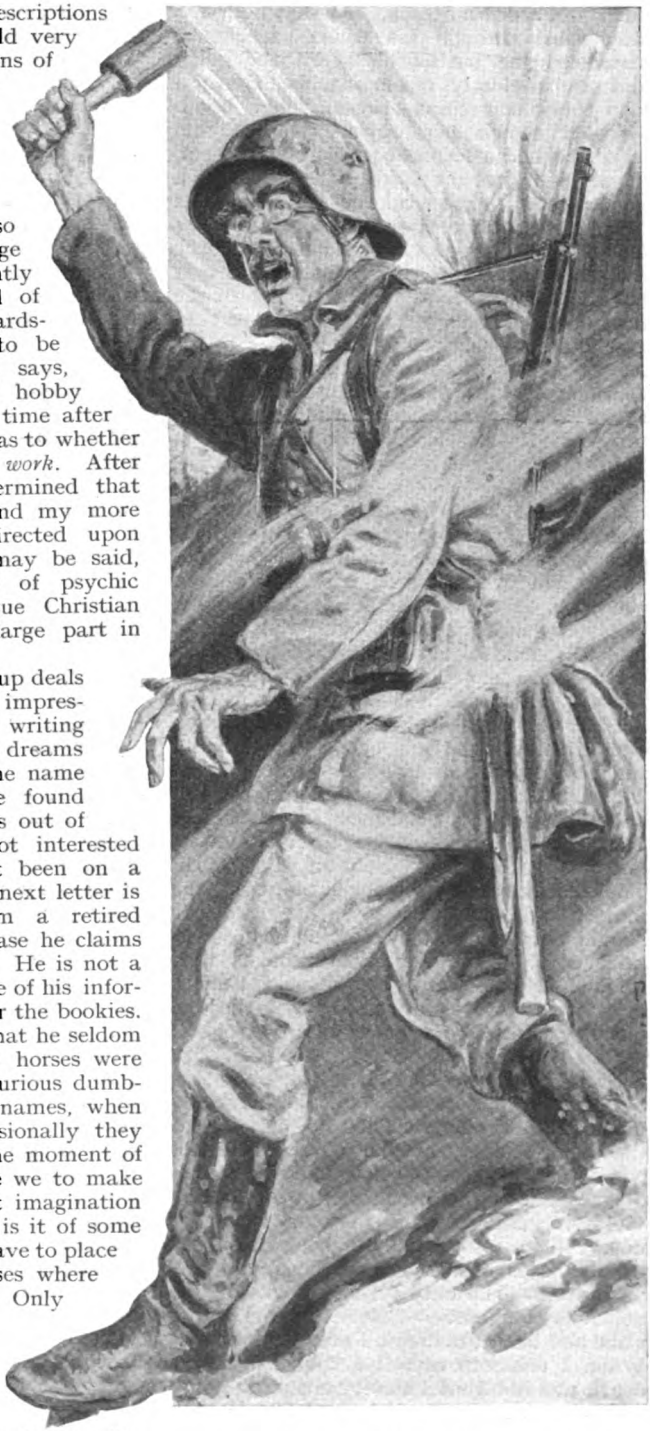
us in what purported to be descriptions of life in the beyond. I could very readily find a dozen illustrations of the fact among those posthumous accounts which profess to describe the experiences which await us. The general idea of concerted music is also very familiar. "I play in an orchestra and I enjoy it so much." Such was a message which I received myself recently from a friend who was fond of music. Lester Coltman, the Guardsman, in what is asserted to be his after-death experience, says, "Orchestration is my great hobby here." And adds, "For some time after I passed over I was undecided as to whether music or science should be my *work*. After much serious thought I determined that music should be my hobby, and my more earnest intent should be directed upon science in every form." It may be said, generally, that the evidence of psychic research agrees with the vague Christian tradition that music plays a large part in the higher spheres.

The next letter which I pick up deals with a very much less elevated impression. This is an American, writing from San José, California, who dreams names. "If I can identify the name with some race-horse I have found that the horse has, nine times out of ten, won the race. I am not interested in horse-racing and have not been on a track for twenty years." The next letter is also about horse-racing from a retired captain in Ireland. In his case he claims to get a picture, not a name. He is not a betting man and makes no use of his information, which is just as well for the bookies. Going over his results, I find that he seldom got a winner, but that his horses were invariably placed. It was a curious dumb-crambo system of conveying names, when supplied by vision, but occasionally they came in an audible voice at the moment of waking from sleep. What are we to make of such an experience? Is it imagination followed by coincidence? Or is it of some humble psychic origin? We have to place on the other side the many cases where such dreams have betrayed us. Only last year I had the experience of backing the dream of a friend for the Derby, and being five pounds poorer as a consequence.

The next letter takes us back into the black days of the War. It is from an English lady living in Finland. Her younger brother was killed at the Front in one of the final



She saw an elderly German who threw something — presumably a bomb — which struck her down.

battles in a dawn attack. At that hour the lady went through his whole experience, visualized the battlefield, heard the guns, and saw an elderly, red-moustached German who threw something—presumably a bomb—which struck her down. Some nights later she had a second equally vivid dream, in which a radiant spirit led her along a poplar-lined French road and halted at last at the spot where the dead body of her brother was lying. She declares that she had every reason at the time to think that her brother was at a depot and not in the firing-line. It was after the Armistice that official news was given of his death. This is one of a class of cases which have been so common that no reasonable man can deny them. To explain them is another matter, for even if one accepts the full faith of Spiritualism there is a good deal which is inexplicable.

The next item is from the West of America. The writer has three times during ten years had an extraordinary and very vivid dream which has always been the same. He was in each case commanding the bodyguard of an Oriental Sultan and had to defend a palace attacked by rebels. On each occasion he was killed, and found himself after death looking down upon a litter of dead bodies. The country in which these incidents occurred gradually revealed itself to him as being Oman, upon the East Coast of Arabia, and the dreamer actually opened a correspondence with the Sultan of Muscat, a letter from whom he enclosed to me as a proof of good faith. The Sultan took a lively interest in the matter and was anxious that the dreamer should visit him, but the coming of the War intervened. The American protests that he is still planning to go to Muscat, though one would have thought that it is the one place which he would have carefully avoided. No sequel has yet been reported, though the letter is two years old.

I pick up a letter now which is of a not uncommon type. It is from a lady in Chicago. She lay at the point of death, with a temperature of one hundred and five degrees. She was insensible, but dreaming vividly. She seemed to hear music of unearthly beauty, and to be surrounded by the faces of many loved ones who had passed on. The only sensation was one of delicious languor. "It was the most vivid and beautiful dream I ever experienced. When I came to myself I thought that if death was like that I should not mind going at any time. Is it, then, possible for the soul to leave the body for a short while and then to return again?" My answer was that I had numerous similar cases which seemed to show that it *was* possible, and that such knowledge did indeed remove all fear of death.

The next letter is also from an American lady, and is not very dissimilar in its subject. It was not the weakness of disease, but it was the emotion produced by music which, in her case, seems to have effected a temporary dissociation between soul and body. The opera was "Manon Lescaut," and Caruso the singer. "At the grand climax," she writes, "I seemed to float away upward, quite overwhelmed. After the curtain fell I was still away. The live part of me had separated from my body, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I forced myself together. With a look of consternation the lady next me observed my condition." Reduced to common speech, all this simply means that the lady was on the point of fainting, and yet it may make us ask ourselves what we mean exactly when we use the phrase.

THE dream which duplicates an actual occurrence is hard to explain, but an even tougher problem is presented by the prophetic dream which gives a picture of the future. My next letter is from a man in Liverpool, who found himself in his sleep standing by a railway station and looking up a sloping road with another road at right-angles at the top. There was a bridge above him, and over the bridge came a tramcar, on which was painted some strange place names of which he had never heard. Some months later he visited Wrexham for the first time, and there he found the station, the road, the slope, the bridge, and the tram, which had Welsh names on the outside. Nothing arose from the incident and there seemed no possible reason why it should have been shot into the sleeper's mind months beforehand. In the case of this and similar incidents, which are both trivial and psychic, one can only suppose that an attempt is made—we cannot say by whom—to awaken the interest of the recipient in spiritual matters by showing him things which are outside the ken of material science. It certainly has such an effect, for the man who has had such an experience is far more open afterwards to psychic knowledge. An alternative explanation would be that in one of those nocturnal rambles which our souls or etheric bodies do seem to take, the dreamer had visited Wrexham—possibly drawn by the fact that he had relatives living there—and that he chanced to carry back some memory of its appearance. The tram might well be running in the early morning.

A second experience by the same gentleman rather supports the latter explanation. He dreamed that he saw a lady friend

working at some pink material. On inquiry she said, "Yes, I stayed up late last night making a crêpe de Chine blouse of pink silk which I particularly wished to finish." Since she was late it is probable that his dream saw that which was actually occurring at the moment, and that it was an instance of what has been called "travelling clairvoyance," where the etheric body brings back information — surprisingly trivial information at times—to the unconscious material brain.

The next item is less complex. It comes from Battersea. A Mrs. Arbuthnot dreamed that her life was threatened by a friend whom we will call Mrs. Burton. When she told the dream she was not aware that Mrs. Burton had at that time a maniacal attack in which she imagined she had some deadly grievance against her friend. This would appear to be a clear case of telepathy. I may add that telepathy, which is constantly given as an explanation of other psychic happenings, is, in my opinion, among the less common phenomena, and is by no means so clearly established as some of the physical manifestations.

Suddenly a huge man appeared before him, holding a triangular dagger of peculiar shape with which he made the motion of striking.

To return to prophetic dreams, they are occasionally of a very helpful character, as the next example will show. The writer is a Manchester man, fresh from Cambridge. During a visit to Switzerland he dreamed that he was in a tropical land, sandy, with shimmering heat and an intensely blue sky. Suddenly a huge man appeared before him, holding a triangular dagger of peculiar shape with which he made the motion of striking. He then vanished. Next day the youth explored a disused tunnel. "I went in and found magnificent icicles hanging from the roof. All at once I saw one very large one. It was triangular and came to a sharp point. I thought of my dream and recognized the triangular dagger. I stopped, and at that moment the whole thing fell with a crash. It must have

weighed at least two hundred pounds, and would, perhaps, have killed me." What are we to make of this? Is it not beyond coincidence? And how are we to explain the tropical scene? I would only suggest—but with all reserve—that many of us believe that we have guides or guardian angels. These guides would appear to be often drawn from the Oriental races. Supposing that this youth's guide was an Egyptian, he might in warning his pupil have brought back with him some impression of his native land. The student remarked that the dagger was of a shape which was once used in Ancient Egypt. Such an explanation may stand until a better one is found.

A number of these dreams are concerned with objects which have been lost and found again by revelation. There is always the consideration that such finds may have been the result of some subconscious train of thought, as occurs so often in our everyday experience when the solution of some problem wells suddenly up from the unknown depths of our mentality. But in some cases this would seem to be impossible. Here, for example, is a letter from Bath. The writer was a solicitor in a South African city. He had a client to whose father in early days a grant of land had been made in the outskirts of the city. At the time it was of no value, but as the city spread it became so, but very many years had passed and the grant was lost. One night the client dreamed where it was. Next day, accompanied by a resident who knew the town well, he walked to the place of his dream, identified a certain cottage, had his knock answered by a lady whom he had seen in his sleep, walked through to an outhouse, opened an old box, and plucked out the grant, which had been stuffed into an envelope tacked to the inside of the lid. It is sad to relate that after all this trouble the grant was not admitted by the new generation of officials. But the story, told as it is by the solicitor concerned, seems to be incontrovertible. What are we to make of it? Here, again, we seem to be balanced between the possibilities of the wandering soul and those of external intelligence. In any case such incidents deserve our best consideration, and our men of science may well turn their minds from the insects and the stones in order to unravel problems so intimately related to our own nature and fate.

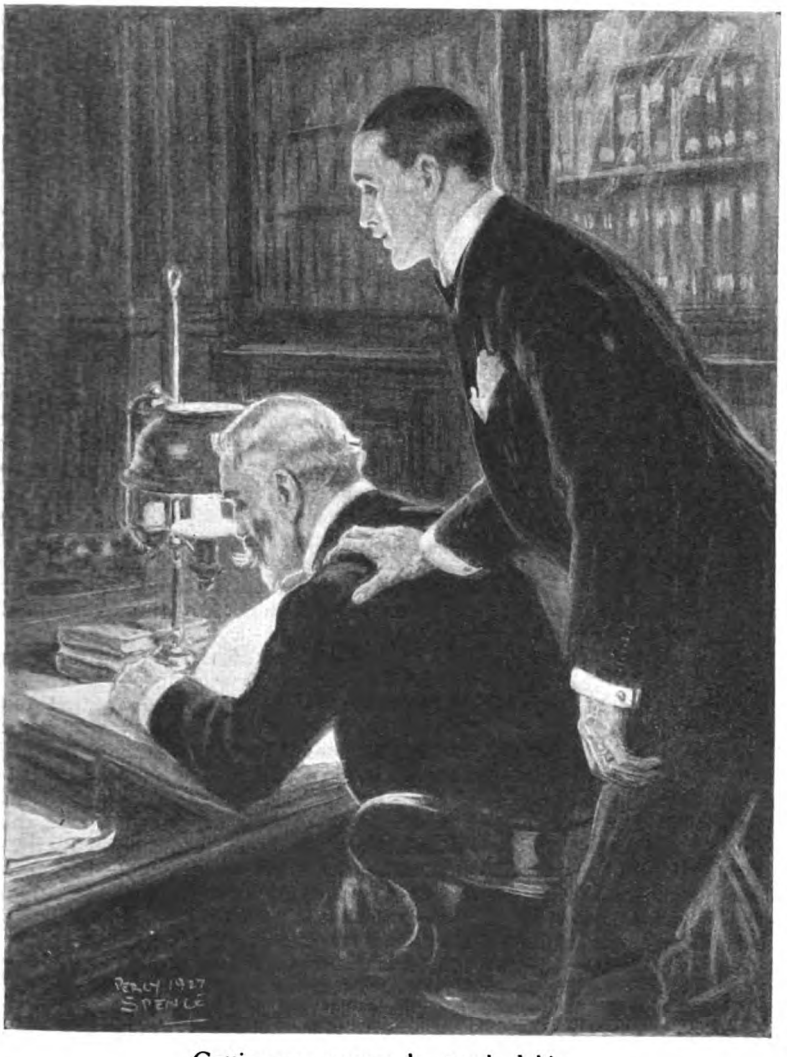
The next letter happens to be from the same quarter and on a similar subject. It tells the tale of a Muizenberg lady who lost her box, and had successive dreams of it for several months during its various and devious wanderings, until she at last saw it in her sleep reposing upon the shelf of the Lost Property Office, whence she duly reclaimed it next morning. When we read such an account we feel a certain sense of injury as we survey our own losses, and we wonder why we also should not all have such help. Here we must admit that we are on the edge of the unknown. The wireless message comes sharp and clear when we tune into the exact vibration. A fraction above or below, and it is gone. Here, too, there may be unconscious tuning-in of the receiver. But what is the transmitter? That is the next great problem which faces humanity.

It is clear that to find the right receiver is difficult, otherwise messages would not be sent in so indirect a fashion. The next example illustrates what I mean. A London lady gets a message, or rather a vision, which assures her that an unknown woman who is embracing two children is about to "go on her last journey—her last, long, strange journey." The actual message and the name, Mrs. Lorimer, came audibly. On inquiry, the dreamer found that there was such a woman, that she had two children, and subsequently that she died. We may well deduce that if the receptive power were a common one the message would certainly have been given more directly, and not in a way which was so distant that it might well have miscarried.

I HAVE spoken of the night travels of the etheric body. I come now to a very remarkable example of it—unique, so far as I know, because the return to the material body was slow and clearly remembered. The gentleman who writes to me—a Manchester man—fell asleep before his fire. He woke up, still seated in a chair, in the early morning and glanced at the clock. It marked twelve-fifteen, but—it was not *his* clock.

With amazed eyes he looked along the mantelpiece. Everything was strange. There were two big bronzes of equestrian figures. The mantelpiece itself was of heavy red marble. The fire-irons were of massive brass. He was so petrified that it was a long time before he could bring himself to look round. When at last he cautiously turned his head, he found himself in a large room lined with books. There was a reading-lamp on a long central table, and a man was seated at it. My correspondent was filled with the idea that he had wandered into some stranger's house, so, with an effort, he rose and addressed the man at the table. Getting no answer, he touched him. As the man took no notice and remained very still the writer was speculating whether he was dead, when he suddenly turned the

page and went on reading. At this instant the walls of the room seemed to whirl round, and my correspondent found himself in his own chair, facing his own clock, and with the time registered as twelve-twenty-five. He winds up his narrative with the words,



Getting no answer, he touched him.

"I give you my most solemn word of honour that I have told you what I consider to be the truth."

Accepting this final statement we have to find a rational explanation. The most rational surely is that the process of travelling clairvoyance and the return from the dream journey were done slowly and consciously instead of coming in a flash. Had the latter been the case the dreamer would simply have had a vague recollection of some large room with books in it, and it would in no way have differed from a normal dream impression. But for some reason the process was carried out slowly and in stages. The etheric body came to conscious life—a life which could be registered on the material brain—while making itself very comfortable in front of the fire of what would appear to have been a club library with one belated member therein. The insubstantial etheric body was unable to impress the material senses of the reader, but it is possible that if the latter had looked up from his book he might have had a wonderful ghost story to tell for the rest of his life. Then came the belated return, when, like a homing pigeon, the wandering soul shoots swiftly and unerringly back to its body. Should it lose its way, then one more mortal has died in his sleep.

There is some evidence that it is more easy for these dream messages to be conveyed to us by pictures and symbols than by words, though sometimes the picture comes first and then the explanatory message. At the time, early in the War, when there was alarm about the fate of Maurice Hewlett's son, a lady in Scotland had a clear vision of a man being rescued from a seaplane, and an audible message came, "That is Maurice Hewlett's son. He is rescued." This was put on record at the time, a fact which I have tested, for I have before me a document, "We, the undersigned, declare that the account of this dream was given to us, as written, *before*

the announcement of the rescue appeared." This is signed by two witnesses. One could hardly wish for a clearer case than this, but it may have been the travelling soul of the dreamer which carried back both the picture and the message. Again, I have an account from a French lady whose husband managed the household affairs in an unsatisfactory way. She saw her dead father, who handed her a large key. This key opened a door which led to a room which was exceedingly untidy, but became all right again when the lady entered. She took the dream to mean that she was to be mistress in her own house, and acted accordingly, with the best results. Here the appearance of the father certainly gives an other-world flavour to the transaction.

Such dreams are useful, but occasionally I read of one which is so useless that one is hard put to it when one tries to weave it into any philosophy. Thus, one correspondent dreamed that a child was born to him which was so discoloured in the body that it would appear to have been scorched. A policeman was mixed up with the dream. Next morning a policeman entered his shop with a summons to a jury for an inquest. The case proved to be that of a poor tramp who had been badly scorched by his straw bed taking fire. Such an incident is not entirely beyond coincidence, and in no case does it seem to have served any purpose.

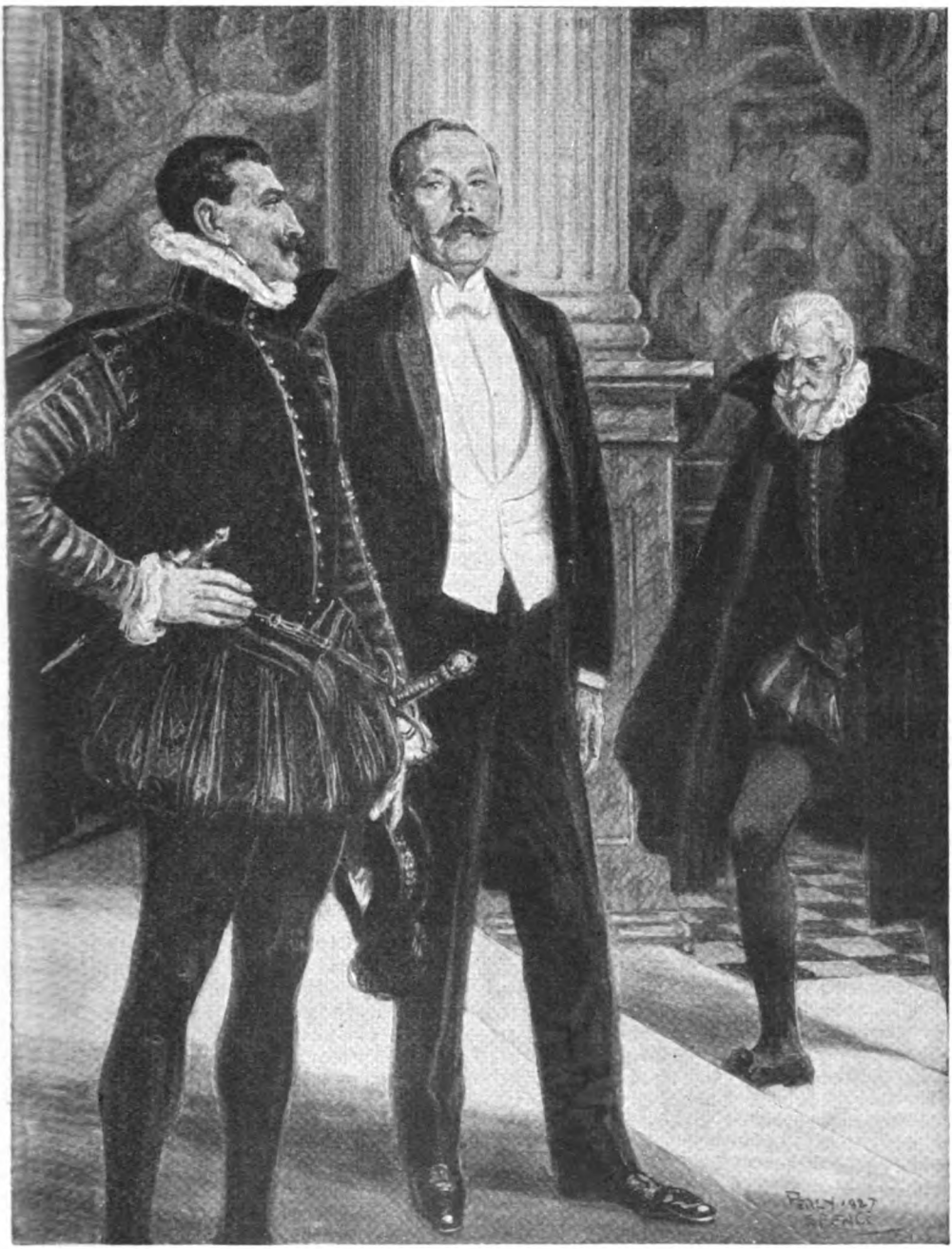
Sometimes one can see no object in the communication, and yet the psychic evidence is very strong and is calculated to turn the mind of the recipient to spiritual interpretations of life. Thus, in the case of a Mrs. Lofty, she writes to say that she lost her son, Grantham Lofty, in a flying mishap. "One day I felt like ending everything, when it was suggested to me in the most clear way that I should think of my dream." It seems that, two years before, the lady and a friend had both dreamed the same dream on the same night. The dream included a message that James Lofty was dying, or dead, in No. 7 Ward. "I wrote the dream out at once and sent it to my sister." Immediately after the tragedy occurred, two years after the dream, the lady visited Haslar Hospital, and found that the ward in which her son died was No. 7, and that by some error his name on the hospital books had been entered as James. This certainly is a complex and remarkable case, but it seems to have assured the mother of his continued existence and consoled her in the hour of need.

ONE very common dream impression which may well be connected with those soul wanderings which come, in my opinion, well within the category of things proven is the feeling of flying. It often occurs to dreamers, but more to some than to others, in proportion as their switch-off is absolute or partial. Thus, a dreamer writes from South Carolina: "One dream comes to me over and over again. At least one thousand times I have dreamed that I was exercising a power of transporting my body through the air in defiance of gravitation. Usually, I just lift my feet from the ground and will myself to float in the desired direction without any physical effort. At other times, when I wish to reach a higher level, I work my arms as if they were wings. I seem in my dreams to call the attention of ordinary mortals to what I am doing, but if they possess the power to see it, they never make any comment on it." They would, of course, no more see it than the man in the club library saw the etheric body which touched him on the shoulder.

Several of these letters—and perhaps the most important—allude to the perceptions which the dreamers carry back of some wonderful land which some of us think is actually the etheric world, suited for etheric life, and which others may try to explain as a glimpse of our own tropics, or as some imaginative scene which has no actual existence. It is as real to the dreamer as was that clock in the club library upon which the sleeper read the time, and equally real seem those figures with whom they hold converse.

Here is the sort of thing from a correspondent: "I have twice in sleep crossed over into the spirit world. The radiance and wonderful beauty of the country was what struck me more than anything. I felt, above all, that this was a land of extraordinary happiness. On the first occasion I met and spoke with my brother. On the second I saw no one, but was deeply impressed by the beauty of the lakes and hills among which I found myself. The colours were indeed different from those on earth. They had an exceeding glory."

This matches very closely a large number of other descriptions. I am aware of all the difficulties connected with such a view of the beyond. We are faced with the obvious reflection that hills and valleys are the result of geological action, of rain and age-long denudation, so that their existence, from our point of view, would seem to imply similar actions in their formation. It is a legitimate and cogent objection. And yet the positive agreement of a great number of witnesses cannot be easily set aside. Some have thought that this old earth may have its own etheric body, even as its inhabitants have. Certainly if we are to cut out all effects of earthly elemental action heaven would become a flat and



"Well, if you fellows are going to dress like that, we poor moderns have no chance."

waterless expanse, which would seem more logical than attractive.

In discussing dream appearances of the other spheres, I may perhaps be permitted to give an experience of my own—though I may quote with all reverence, "Whether in the body or out of it I know not." I had been told at a séance that I should visit in my sleep some other sphere, upon which I earnestly begged that I might carry back the memory. There followed an eventful night, some of which is quite as clear to

me as any adventure I have had upon the earth's surface.

My first impression was that of a row of rather dilapidated stone villas, such as one would see in the suburbs of Edinburgh. They looked well in front, but were only half finished within, though I observed pictures upon the walls—frescoes rather, since they seemed to be part of the wall. There was waste ground around, untidy and weed-covered. I saw no dwellers in these uncomfortable buildings, but I was aware all through that I had a companion at my side whose face I never saw. This invisibility did not seem to worry me at the time, and I made no attempt to get past it.

Then, with no consciousness of an intervening journey, I was in another place. It was a large hall or assembly place. Once again there were coloured frescoes on the wall, but I carried away no impression of the subjects. There were pillars and an ornamental ceiling. Close to me was standing a man dressed in Elizabethan dress. He had a plum-coloured doublet and trunk-hose. We eyed each other, and I was so completely myself that I smiled and said, "Well, if you fellows are going to dress like that, we poor moderns have no chance." He made no answer and his face was quite unresponsive. I could recognize the man now if I saw him: ruddy-faced, about thirty-five years of age, short crisp black hair, and a black moustache, well-built and vigorous. He was sullen and sinister in his expression. I was conscious of someone else approaching with a black Spanish cloak. Then it all disappeared.

I was now in a vehicle of some sort; I have no impression of a horse, but I was more conscious than before of my companion. There was a vague feeling of hurry—we had to be at a certain place by a certain time. The road was broad and curving, with a hillside upon the left with some ancient ruins built right into it. At the top of the hill we stopped. A wonderful panorama of a city lay before me. It was built upon low hills, and it undulated away to the horizon. The sky and atmosphere were grey, but not more so than London on a winter day. I have never seen so great a city. High buildings and towers stretched as far as I could see, but I saw no spires. Then all faded away and I awoke.

It was a very intense experience, and I give the explanation which I received next day from psychic sources for what the reader may think it is worth. It came in reply to questions: "It was a probationary city. Those pictures were instructive to people in that stage. You did not see your guide because it would have taken from the power. The power was running low, so we had to hurry in the end. You were taken to a grey city because that side of spirit life has always excited your sympathy and curiosity." Such was my most vivid nocturnal experience.

Dreaming true is the only psychic power which I have hitherto developed outside healing. Before we went to Australia I got the name "Nalderu" imprinted on my mind in sleep, and wrote it down on waking. We sailed in the *Naldera*, though we had intended another ship and had never consciously heard of the former. Again, I have put it on record before the event how I dreamed that the Piave would be the turning-point of the War many months before the Italians were driven back sixty miles to that position, where they won their decisive victory. In literature I have had little help from dreams. Once I woke with a line ringing in my head. It was "She walked alone on the Hills of Fate." I wrote a poem called "Victrix" round it, and it marks my highest point, perhaps, on the foothills of Parnassus.

I MAY conclude these notes by stating my opinion as to the exact nature of dreams, as I have already done in my "New Revelation." There seem to me to be two forms, and only two: one the experiences of the released spirit, and the other the confused action of the lower faculties which remain in the body when the spirit is absent. The former is rare and beautiful, but the memory of it fails us. The latter is common and varied, but usually fantastic or ignoble. By noting what is absent in the lower dreams one can tell what the missing qualities are, and so judge what part of us goes to make up the spirit. Thus in these dreams humour is wanting, since we see things which strike us afterwards as ludicrous, and are not amused. The sense of proportion and of judgment is all gone. In short, the higher is palpably gone, and the lower, the sense of fear, of sensual impression, of self-preservation, is functioning all the more vividly because it is relieved from the higher control.

THE HUMAN CHASE.—I.

The Masked Trinity

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Illustrated by
S. ABBEY

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR ABSOLOM of Scotland Yard, seated alone in his private office, came at last to a decision over which he had pondered for some time. He laid down the letter which he had been reading and rang the bell.

"Send Brett to me," he directed the commissionaire who answered it.

"Certainly, sir."

Philip Brett followed hard upon the summons—a pleasant-looking young man of slim but athletic build, curiously clear grey eyes, sunburnt skin, and firm but sensitive mouth. He was utterly unlike any recognized type of detective, but then Absolom, with his well-tailored clothes and close-cropped military moustache, carried few suggestions of Scotland Yard in his own personality.

"Sit down, Brett," he invited. "Anything pressing on to-day?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

The Inspector glanced down the columns of a ledger which stood by his side.

"Good," he remarked. "I sent for you, Brett, to have a little private chat. Five years you've been in the service, I see," he went on. "You've handled a good many cases — most of them successfully. Nothing very big, though. Not your fault, I dare say. That's just the luck of things. Are you ambitious?"

"Yes, sir," was the quiet reply.

"Character A1," the Inspector proceeded, thoughtfully. "Not a single black mark. That's good. Plenty of pluck, apparently. You took Holland single-handed, didn't you, and got a bullet in your arm? Not much physique——"

"I beg your pardon, sir," the young man interrupted. "I was in my school team at Rugger and cricket, and I've four or five cups for rowing. I can box a bit, too."

The Inspector nodded approvingly.

"That's all to the good, of course," he admitted. "There's something else I'd like to be sure about. Went to a Public School, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"West-end tailor," he continued, glancing at the other's well-cut tweed suit. "Rooms in Down Street, eh? Correct?"

"Yes, sir," Philip Brett acknowledged. "I have a small private income, left me two years ago. If I had known that it was coming, I might have stayed in the Army. As it is, I like my work too much to give it up, and I have simply made myself a little more comfortable."

The Inspector glanced back at the ledger and closed it. He leaned across the desk.

"There's a big job going," he confided. "There are half-a-dozen young men I ought to give it to before you, but they don't just fit in. For one thing, they're too easily recognizable. The trouble with most of my staff is that, whatever clothes they wear, you can't mistake 'em—look all the time as though they were made up for a crook play. Read this."

Detective Philip Brett stretched out his hand for the letter, and studied it carefully.

"Hotel de Paris,
Monte Carlo,
September 2nd.

"Dear Mr. Detective Inspector Absolom,

"How unkind of you to hurry me away from Monte Carlo! I had just succeeded where every mathematician has failed—in

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evolving the really perfect system. In a month the Casino would have closed its doors.

"I will take what I hope you will not think a mean revenge. I will visit you in London. You shall know the exact date of my arrival as soon as I have made my plans.

"Your police system, Mr. Absolom, would have been a great credit to Queen Elizabeth or Henry VIII.; to-day, do you mind my suggesting that you are just a little old-fashioned? These blundering inquiries, these awkward, ill-dressed sleuth-hounds, so out of the picture, my dear sir. They might wear Scotland Yard upon their caps, like a tourist company's guide. If ever I decide to retire, I shall offer you the services of my own staff. Believe me, you would learn something then of the real art of espionage.

"I have many names to draw from—some of which I have made famous—but I will content myself by signing this with the name which appears most often in your terribly erroneous descriptions of me.

"MATTHEW."

THERE was the faintest possible change in Brett's face as he reached the signature—a quick indrawn breath, a flash of those ordinarily mild grey eyes. His Chief noticed it and approved.

"The letter came by this morning's post," the latter observed. "I have been wondering whether it was a hoax?"

"Nothing of the sort, sir," was the confident reply. "That letter's genuine enough."

"Why do you think so?"

"I've studied this man and his methods," Brett confided. "He's an amazing character, but he has his weaknesses, like the rest of us. If ever we catch him—and we shall catch him, sir—it will be through this one trait in his character—his vanity."

The Inspector nodded thoughtfully.

"Something in that," he admitted.

"They say he's a man with few pleasures in his life," the young detective went on. "This is one of his greatest—to mock and flout his pursuers. He'll never deny himself that. He's had the most marvellous career of any criminal in history, but some day or other he'll fall into line, he'll do as every one of the others does—he'll make the one small mistake. Then we shall get him."

There was a curious, almost a feverish note of anticipation in Brett's last words. The Inspector looked across at him curiously.

"Keen on the job, eh, Brett?" he inquired.

"Mr. Absolom," the detective replied, and if his physique was somewhat the physique of a youth, his voice now was the voice of a man, "there's no criminal in the world I'd rather bring in than Matthew."

"There is another matter now to discuss," the Inspector proceeded, adjusting his pince-nez and studying a memorandum block by his side. "In no less aristocratic and respectable a neighbourhood than Belgrave Square, there exists a gaming house where baccara and *chemin de fer* are played for very high stakes. The place calls itself a mixed bridge club, and exists under the name of the 'Wanderers,' but I doubt whether there's a rubber a week played there."

"Is this a matter of a raid, sir?"

"God bless my soul, no!" was the emphatic reply. "No spot in London likely to be so useful to us at the present moment. On the contrary, we want people to feel that they are safe there. Some day or other a very big fish may wander in. That will be the time for the gaff, eh?"

"But surely, sir," the other ventured, "they must feel that it's touch and go all the time with them?"

The Inspector shook his head gently.

"They're gaining confidence every day. As a matter of fact, the management are very generous. We're taking very large bribes from them."

"Bribes!"

"The Police Orphanage was the richer last week by a hundred pounds; the three constables on the beat are receiving five pounds a week each, the Inspector ten, besides occasional gratuities. The money is regularly handed in, of course, but the management of the club have no idea of that. They think they have the police in the hollow of their hands."

"I see," Brett murmured.

"This is where you commence your campaign," his Chief explained. "You'll have to join that club, and you'll have to cut out Down Street altogether for the present. There's a small suite already taken for you at the Milan Hotel, in the name of Walsh—Andrew Walsh. You are one of the banking firm of Sydney. You have plenty of money, but you're modest about it—plenty of money, but very few friends in London. You have also a very charming lady companion who will join the club at the same time."

Brett looked a little doubtful.

"I can manage everything else, sir," he confided—"I can even play chemie a bit—but the lady——"

"She will be provided for you, of course."

The Inspector touched a bell, muttered a word of instruction, and a moment or two later a young woman was shown into the room. She was quietly but exceedingly well dressed, and her smile as she greeted the Inspector was most attractive.

They shook hands and Brett's vague misgivings began to disappear.

"This is Mr. Brett," the latter said. "Lady Muriel Carter."

They shook hands, and Brett's vague misgivings began to disappear.

"Lady Muriel will help you about joining the club," her sponsor explained. "You'll have to lose some money there, of course. The Treasury will honour all your chits. When you are in don't be afraid of losing a little."

"May I ask you one thing, sir?" Brett ventured. "Why are you so sure that our man will come to this club?"

His Chief smiled.

"No one can be sure of anything, of

course," he admitted, "but I am letting the club rip on in the hope, and I think it's worth while for you to bank on it, too. The fact of it is, our man is immune from every form of weakness except gambling. We know he was in London last year, but we couldn't get at him. We tried him with the most beautiful women in the world, and they might as well have been maids-of-all-work. But there's one thing his records show: wherever in the world there has been gambling on a great scale—at the Travellers' Club in Paris, Cannes, Monte Carlo, Madrid, Florida, Buenos Ayres—sooner or later Matthew has paid one of his furtive visits, there is a sensational loss or a sensational win, but before we can lay our hands on him he has disappeared. They are talking already about a young Argentine having lost twenty thousand pounds in Belgrave Square the other night. That's the sort of gossip will bring him. By the by," he added, looking at his watch, "my time is up. You will find a packet of visiting-cards in your room, and your number is a hundred and twenty-eight, Milan Hotel. Have your clothes moved in with as little fuss as possible. You'd better dine somewhere publicly to-night with Lady Muriel. She'll arrange it."

"Ciro's at nine," the young lady decided.

"I'm not a member," Brett told her.

"I'll put your name down," she promised. "See you in the lobby."

AT Ciro's, soon after they had taken their places at a very desirable table, Lady Muriel pointed out two people on the other side of the room. The man was dark, tall, with masses of grey hair brushed smoothly back from a not unintelligent but too low forehead. His companion, who, from the perfection of her gown and jewellery, appeared to be a Frenchwoman, talked more to the *maître d'hôtel* than to her friend, and seemed bored with the whole proceeding.

"That's the man we want to get in touch with," Lady Muriel confided—"Colonel Braund, the secretary of the Wanderers' Club. The woman with him is the Comtesse Riga. Our friend, Inspector Absolom, would probably regard her as one of the decoys of the place. I believe, as a matter of fact, though, that she is exceedingly wealthy and gambles because she loves it."

"You don't know either of them, I suppose?" Brett inquired.

"Not yet," she admitted, "but things are moving. "I have noticed incidents already which you, naturally, would not be looking out for. We are strangers here, and we look fairly opulent. That is quite enough for Braund. I saw him send for the manager, just as I knew he would. He has our names already, copied from the book. He knows by this time that you are Andrew Walsh, banker, of Sydney, and that I am Lady Muriel Carter."

"Yes, but you will forgive my pointing out," Brett ventured, after a moment's hesitation, "that Debrett's is a very easily accessible volume. Your name is, I presume, like my own, fabricated."

She shook her head.

"Mr. Absolom is not quite such a bungler as that," she assured him. "Muriel Carter is my name, and I have a perfect right to my title. My people are all settled at a convenient distance in the wilds of Ireland, and I am supposed to be doing a little 'journalism' in town—which, indeed, is the truth. That is where our friend is rather clever in the stage settings. One of us being genuine is a guarantee for the other."

"I see," Brett ruminated. "And the next step?"

"Will come from them, if not to-night, to-morrow night."

It came even sooner than they had expected. Before they had proceeded very far with their dinner, they saw the two people in whom they were interested rise from their places and, preceded by a bowing *maître d'hôtel*, cross the floor and establish themselves in the other half of their recess. The man caught Brett's eye, and leaned forward.

"You will forgive our intrusion," he begged. "Madame finds the draught in our usual corner intolerable."

The preambles of a little desultory conversation were already established. An hour or so later, when Braund and his companion rose to leave, the latter turned to Lady Muriel.

"You go on, perhaps, to the Florida?"

Lady Muriel shook her head doubtfully.

"I am afraid not," she replied. "My friend, Mr. Walsh, is not very fond of dancing. I fear he has more reprehensible tastes."

"As, for example?" Braund inquired politely.

The candour of Brett's confession was irresistible.

"It is very foolish," he admitted, apologetically. "I am a Colonial, you see, and I am afraid we are all fonder of a little gambling when we have a night off."

Braund's eyes seemed suddenly to narrow.

"Well," he said, after a moment's pause, and as though satisfied with his scrutiny, "there's plenty of gambling in London if one knows the ropes and has introductions."

"I suppose so," Brett assented, listlessly. "I've been put up for a bridge club already, where they play two pound a hundred—'rather a gamble,' the secretary called it.

That isn't the sort of gamble I mean, though."

"If you'd really like a little of the real thing," Braund suggested, "may I ask to whom I have the pleasure of talking?"

Mutual introductions were effected. Braund took his new friend by the arm.

"Hypocritical city, London, you know," he observed. "We have to keep this sort of thing very quiet, but you can have a game of *chemin de fer* to-night, if you'd care for it. I can't promise that it will be a big affair, but there's always money there."

"Nothing I should like better," the pseudo-Australian banker admitted with enthusiasm. "I thought it was illegal in London, though."

Braund smiled.

"We have good friends amongst the police," he confided.

THE Inspector was in an exceedingly ruffled state when Brett called upon him to report a week later. After the briefest of greetings, he passed a telegram across the table.

"What do you make of that?" he demanded.

Brett read the few words carefully. It had been handed in at the Gare du Nord, Paris, late on the previous afternoon:—

"Coming over by Blue Train Thursday. Engage suitable accommodation, and meet me Victoria. Love. MATTHEW."

The Inspector was thoroughly upset. In Brett's eyes, however, there flamed, for a moment only, a sudden fire; afterwards he laughed softly.

"The man's vanity again!"

"Ordering me to meet him!" the Inspector spluttered. "Gad, I should like him to have the accommodation I'd find him! He'd hear the tapping under his window before long, and I don't think he'd find his bed too comfortable."

"Anyway, we'll meet the train, I suppose?" Brett observed.

"Yes, we'll meet the train, but whether we'll find him or not's a different matter. He's just as likely to be travelling as the Archbishop of Canterbury or working as an extra stoker on the engine!"

He took up the telephone receiver.

"Put me through to the passports office at Dover, afterwards to the Chief Commissioner at Dover, and come and fetch a wireless for the captain of the *Maid of Kent*. . . . How are you getting on, young man?" he inquired, taking a cigarette from his case and tapping it.

"Quite well, thank you, sir," his visitor reported. "I've been at the club most nights and I think they're becoming used to me there. The chemie seems straight enough, except that there's a seven-and-a-half per cent. *cagnotte*. The baccara's faked. There are three men, one of whom always takes the bank—Vanderleyde, a chocolate manufacturer from Brussels; Solomon, an elderly Jew living up at Highgate; or Amos Wheatley, a retired cotton spinner from Lancashire. I'm pretty good at card tricks myself, but there's nothing any one of these three could learn——"

"What about the company?"

"Extraordinary! Last night I could have made four arrests, including Lampson, the man who is wanted for the Bethnal Green forgery. I passed on certain information to Inspector Collins, with your instructions that no one is to be arrested leaving or entering the club."

"Quite right," the other assented. "We can put our hands on the small fry any time."

"Lady Muriel is making a list of other people she knows," Brett went on. "Good names, some of them, but a pretty disreputable lot, I fancy. There's plenty of money about, though. I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't just the place to attract our friend."

The Inspector spoke on the telephone for several minutes. When he had finished, he had regained his equanimity. He pushed a box of cigarettes across to Brett.

"The trouble will be to recognize the fellow," he confided. "I was talking to the Chef de Sûreté in Paris only yesterday. They have him entered under the name of Forestier, and they have four murders and seven robberies against him. He told me that never in history has there been any man, amateur or professional, such a complete artist in the matter of disguises. He could have made a fortune upon the stage as an impersonator."

"Have you any idea what he really looks like?" Brett asked. "I've read the books, of course; I mean apart from that."

"Brodie, the American detective, faltered out a few words before he died," the Inspector reflected. "Matthew got him in a *café* at Bordeaux. The substance of what he said was that Matthew appeared to be a man of breeding, slim, with a frame of steel, very lissom in his movements, and with particularly brilliant eyes, which he generally concealed behind spectacles. According to Brodie they are of slightly different shades of brown, which is probably why he generally wears spectacles. No use talking about his hair, because he puts on a wig as easily as we should put on a hat. There's one thing you'll always have to remember. He's the quickest man with a gun of any of the

famous criminals. He believes in killing as the safest way out of any situation, and he's lived up to his creed. I never encourage bloodshed, as you know, but if you're sure of your man, don't hesitate. He'll never be taken alive if he can help it. Let's see how quick you can be."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before he was looking into the black muzzle of an automatic. He started, as he threw himself back in his chair.

"That's one on me," he admitted. "I don't know where you learned that trick, but it's good."

"I practise ten minutes every morning, sir," Brett confided. "We may go down together, but I don't think he'll get me first."

"Meet me in private waiting room number sixteen at Victoria Station this afternoon," the Inspector directed, with a little gesture of dismissal.

THE arrival of a crowded boat train at Victoria is usually an event of some interest to the police force at Scotland Yard. Upon this particular occasion, the Chief Inspector, having issued his instructions to his little company of assistants in the waiting-room reserved for the use of the police, was strolling up and down the platform smoking a cigar, and looking about him with the cheerful air of one expecting welcome guests. Brett, a little more in the background, covered a section of the train, and twelve other keen-eyed myrmidons of the Yard, who only appeared upon the platform at the last second, were also exercising a close though inconspicuous surveillance over the stream of descending passengers.

There was a Royal Prince, democratically seated in one of the Pullmans, who was greeted by a little group of friends and hurried away. An English lawn tennis champion fresh from his successes in Paris received a small company of journalists before stepping into his taxicab with a case of rackets under his arm. A Cabinet Minister almost escaped observation until the last moment, when his secretary, arriving late, had to rescue him from the journalists, who had just become aware of his identity. Apart from these three, the travellers seemed to be the usual sort of nondescript crowd. Not one of the watchers had anything to report of the slightest importance. Chief Inspector Absolom and Brett left the station together. The former was taciturn and a little depressed.

"After all, we're only human beings," he remarked, "and it's like looking for a needle in a haystack until we get something to start on. There were at least fifty men got off that train who might have been Matthew. Looks as though the first move would rest with them."

"I'm not so sure," Brett ruminated. "Colonel Braund told me that they were expecting some very high play to-night at the club."

"That sounds interesting," Absolom observed, a little more cheerfully. "Didn't mention any names, I suppose?"

"Better than that, he was inclined to be mysterious," Brett confided.

The two men stood together, waiting for a taxi. A drizzling rain was falling, and everyone else had stepped back into shelter.

"I shall leave you to it," his Chief decided. "If Matthew goes to the club to-night, he'll have his own men watching outside, and they'd spot it at once if any of ours were there. I shall leave the place entirely alone. If you want help, you know what to do."

Brett nodded.

"You're quite right, sir," he approved. "Leave the door open, and unwatched. It's our best chance."

A taxicab arrived at last. The Inspector stepped inside. Brett had resolved on another stroll upon the platform.

"You won't go down there before midnight, I suppose?" the former asked, leaning out of the taxicab window.

"Never anything doing till one o'clock, sir."

"Dine with me at the Olympic Club at ten, if you don't mind waiting so late," the Chief Inspector invited. "If any news comes in I can let you have it."

"I'll be there, sir."

BRETT and his Chief were lingering over their coffee in the smoke-room of the Olympic when the latter, who had been glancing through the late edition of an evening paper, suddenly sat up with a little start.

"What's the meaning of this, I wonder?" he demanded, leaning forward with his forefinger upon an item in the Stop Press:—

"'*Edgar Howson, the English Lawn Tennis Champion, this afternoon won the Men's Singles in the Open Tournament at Versailles, defeating Boiret*, 6–3, 6–4, 6–0.'"

Brett read the paragraph through again, frowning.

"Why, surely that was Howson upon the train?" he muttered. "I saw him with a case of rackets, and half-a-dozen journalists around him."

"And, my God, look here!" his companion exclaimed. "Listen!

"'*Lord Ellacott, who was expected to return to England to-day, is confined to his room at the Hotel Meurice, Paris, by an*

attack of influenza, and will be unable to travel for several days.'

Why, I saw him on the platform shaking hands with Stevens of *The Times!*"

The two men looked at one another. Probably the same thought was forcing its way into both their minds. A club servant respectfully intervened.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Absolom, but a special messenger has just arrived from Scotland Yard. He wishes to see you on urgent business. As there was no one here, I took the liberty of bringing him up at once."

A uniformed sergeant of the police stepped forward.

"What is it, Saunders?" his Chief asked.

"Two burglaries, sir, reported within the last half an hour," the man replied. "One at Ellacott House—a lot of jewellery missing; another at a flat in Dover Street, occupied by Howson, the tennis player."

"Any violence?"

"Howson's servant is rather badly knocked about, sir. He's able to talk, but rambles all the time—will have it that it was his master who attacked him. At Ellacott House, the butler declares that his master returned by the Continental train this afternoon, and went out again later. The whole of her ladyship's jewellery is gone, and many other treasures."

The Chief Inspector, with Brett by his side, hurried downstairs. In the hall the bemedalled commissionaire presented a note. The Chief Inspector read it through and winced. He passed it on to his companion:—

"*Dear Mr. Absolom,*

"*Not bad for a start. We are here, you see, close to you, comfortably established, and looking forward to a prosperous time. Don't change your personnel. We are anticipating many amiable encounters with Mr. Brett.*

"*Ever yours,*

"MATTHEW."

"Who left this note?" Absolom demanded.

"That's just what I can't tell you, sir," the commissionaire replied, in a puzzled tone. "When I went up to the smoke-room bringing you the messenger from Scotland Yard, it certainly wasn't here. I found it lying on my desk when I got back."

Brett, with a word of apology, put it carefully away in his pocket-book.

"We must grin and bear it, I suppose," he remarked. "Some day, though, there will be one too many of these gibing episodes."

At Ellacott House, where an Inspector was already in charge, the whole business appeared almost too pathetically simple. The servants were still hard to convince that it was not their master who had entered, who had ordered a whisky-and-soda, gone to his room for some time, and left the house with apparently the same luggage as he had brought, announcing his intention of staying the night at his club. The original contents of the principal bag, however, were discovered in the bedroom, and it had evidently been re-packed with the jewels and many other objects of great value.

"His lordship's return," the butler explained, "was quite unexpected, as we had received a telegram only an hour previously stating that he was indisposed and unable to travel. No preparations had been made for him, therefore, or dinner arranged for. His valet was out and it was only a chance that I myself was in the house. None of us thought it in the least out of the way, and we were all rather relieved, as a matter of fact, when his lordship said that he would dine and sleep at the club."

"The devil's own luck!" Absolom grumbled, as the two men took their leave. "Everything seems to have conspired to make his get-away a perfectly natural affair."

At Howson's flat there was nothing whatever to be gathered in the way of a clue. The only person who had seen the intruder was Howson's servant, and he, only partially conscious, was still obstinately convinced that it was his master who had attacked him. Absolom and Brett were both a little depressed when they parted at the corner of Dover Street.

"I'm off to bed," the former announced. "You'd better do the same. We shall have all the hotel reports to go through in the morning."

Brett called a taxi.

"I shall just spend an hour in Belgrave Square," he confided.

The Chief Inspector nodded indifferently.

"Waste of time to-night, I should think."

"The place always interests me," Brett admitted, quietly.

BRETT found Lady Muriel exchanging some bank-notes for chips in the secretary's little apartment, an annex to the main room. She called him to her.

"Such foul luck," she sighed. "Three times eights against nines, and the only bank I drew in for a trifle ran eleven times. I'm just changing my last three notes. Give me a drink before you start playing."

"Rather!" he assented, with enthusiasm.

"How much may I change for you, Mr. Walsh?" the secretary inquired, genially.

Brett handed over a hundred pounds' worth of bank-notes, and received blue and

red chips in exchange, after which he followed Lady Muriel to a corner, and ordered some wine from a waiter. As soon as they were alone she leaned towards him. Her misty grey eyes were full of a serious light, her tone was anxious.

"I'm so glad you've come," she confided. "There's something wrong about the place to-night."

He looked around him, the keenness of his observation masked a little by the good-humoured smile upon his lips.

"I don't notice anything particular," he murmured. "Rather more people, perhaps, but very few strangers."

She shook her head.

"It's just a feeling I have," she went on, "but I know I'm right. Even the *habitués* seem changed. There's old Mr. Solomon, for instance. He's playing much higher than usual, and he doesn't seem the same, somehow. Who's the consumptive-looking man with the haggard face we were introduced to the first night?"

"Wheatley," Brett reminded her, "Amos Wheatley. He's a cotton spinner from somewhere in Lancashire. I've looked him up in the book, and he conforms all right. Made three or four millions in the amalgamation of all those mills up North, and has dropped half of it since."

"That's the man," she nodded. "He gave *banque ouverte* to-night, a thing I've never seen him do, and when he lost he laughed—laughed outright, and I've never noticed him even smile before. The whole place gives one a queer impression of everyone being different. Look, there's a vacant place just opposite Mr. Solomon's. You take it and watch him. I'll come and put in your bank."

Brett rose to his feet and, crossing the room, took the chair which the croupier was holding for him. Exactly opposite was Mr. Solomon, indulging in his favourite gesture—dropping his counters through his fingers, collecting them again, and building them into neat piles. He indulged in his usual ceremonious "Good evening" when Brett seated himself, and then resumed his harmless occupation.

"The game is slow to-night," he observed presently, taking off his spectacles for a moment, as though to rest his eyes. "Our friends at the other end of the table are monopolizing it. They take every *banco*, buy every bank, and leave us with nothing to do."

Brett smiled sympathetically. His keen grey eyes had never appeared more

ingenuous. He scratched his chin for a moment, and glanced up at the struggle which was proceeding a few places away. But, indifferent though he seemed, and as good-naturedly emotionless as ever, the whole of his being was suddenly thrilled. Never for a second, however, did he lose his self-control. He felt himself subjected to a close and searching scrutiny, and he bore it without flinching. He even, after a few seconds' pause, carried a little further the desultory conversation.

"Were you here last night, Mr. Solomon?" he inquired.

"Last night and the night before, and, as a matter of fact, every night for the last month. If one is a gambler at heart, what else is there for one to do? I love to gamble. I have business interests in England, or I should live abroad, as near one

" A special messenger from Scotland Yard, sir. I took the liberty of bringing him up."

of the best Casinos as possible. As I cannot do that, I make myself Colonel Braund's best client."

The bank reached the man who was seated on Brett's left. He tossed a ten-pound chip into the pool, which Brett promptly *bancoed* and won. He started his own bank with the same amount.

" Will you permit me to join you, sir ? " Mr. Solomon suggested.

Brett looked around, but Lady Muriel was nowhere in evidence.

" With pleasure," he assented.

They won three coups, but on the fourth *banco* was called by Amos Wheatley, leaning, thin and eager, over the table. Brett shook his head.

" You are quite right, sir," Solomon declared approvingly. " There is enough there for us to divide pleasantly. One must not be too ambitious."

The bank was auctioned and bought at once. Brett rose from his place, leaving his chips in front of him.

" I shall go and finish my drink," he observed. " I'd hate to see it run another three or four times."

He strolled about the room, apparently aimlessly. Gradually he edged his way into the hall and towards the telephone booth. The hall porter pointed apologetically to a notice pinned outside.

" Sorry, sir," he announced, " the telephone's out of order. They're coming to see to it the first thing in the morning."

Brett was for a moment nonplussed.

" Surely there's another somewhere in the building ? " he demanded.

" There's one in Colonel Braund's private office, sir," the man replied, " but that's up at the very top of the house."

" I'll speak from there," Brett decided.

" It's three storeys up, sir," the man told him, doubtfully, " and the lift hasn't been working since we took the premises."

Brett produced a ten-shilling note, and the concierge promptly came out from behind his counter.

" This way, sir," he invited.

They climbed to the top of the house. The concierge unlocked the door of a room and motioned his companion to enter.

" There's the instrument on the table, sir," he pointed out. " I've pushed the latch back, but do you mind locking the door when you leave ? Thank you, sir."

The man received his tip and departed. Brett crossed the floor quickly, sat down at the table, and took up the receiver.

" Four hundred Y," he demanded.

For some time there was no response. He rang again.

" What number did you want ? " a tired voice asked.

"Four hundred Y—urgent."

Again there was a long wait. Then the same tired voice.

"Were you asking for four hundred Y? There is no such number."

"Is that the exchange?" Brett inquired.

"Yes."

"Look in your book of private numbers, quickly," he enjoined. "You'll find four hundred Y all right. Put me through."

There was a longer wait than ever. At the end of it, however, came a man's voice, prompt and decisive:—

"Four hundred Y speaking."

"Walsh," Brett announced, firmly. "You know where I am. Send me a thousand pounds."

"A thousand pounds," the voice repeated. "Very good, Mr. Walsh."

Brett rang off, and leaned back in his chair. Four hundred Y was the night department of Scotland Yard, and "a thousand pounds" was the code word for the strongest force of armed police which could be collected without delay.

COLONEL BRAUND'S office was comfortably, even luxuriously furnished, and in a distant corner was a camp bedstead discreetly concealed by a screen. Brett lingered for a moment in the softly padded chair, his mind fixed upon the little scene below. Step by step he was building up his plans for the next half-hour. He decided not to enter the card-room himself again for the present, but to send the concierge in for Lady Muriel, dispatch her to a place of safety, and, on the arrival of the police, rush the place after the manner of an ordinary raid. Suddenly his reflections were broken in upon. He fancied that he heard the sound of a footstep outside upon the stairs. He half rose to his feet, thrilled by that queer, indefinable sense of danger which nearly all hunters of criminals possess. Then, without the slightest warning, every light in the room went out, and he was left in complete darkness.

There followed several moments of acute and breathless suspense. Brett's hand strayed cautiously round his body to his hip-pocket. He gripped his automatic tightly, and stood a little away from the table. There were three doors, and he faced the one through which he had entered. Gradually a thin line of light warned him that it was being pushed gently open. At the same time, however, two other thin lines of light appeared in different parts of the room. All three doors were now an inch or so ajar. From one of them, at last, a suave but compelling voice broke the terrifying silence.

"Better put that gun down. You're covered three times over through the cracks of the doors."

The detective hesitated. Each of the lines of light was broken at about the same height from the ground by a dark blob.

"We don't tell lies, my young friend," the same voice continued, calmly. "Throw your gun on to the table in front of you, and stand away."

Brett's brain worked quickly. His unseen enemy, without a doubt, had his life in his hands. He threw his gun upon the table. Instantly the room was flooded with light. On the threshold in front of him stood Mr. Solomon, lank and grey of visage, cigarette ash spilt over his old-fashioned frock-coat, and his wisp of black cravat as usual a little awry. Framed in the other two doorways stood Mr. Vanderleyde and Amos Wheatley. Mr. Solomon lowered the gun which he had been carrying.

"Keep away from the table, Brett," he enjoined. "You see I am dispensing with my own gun, but my friends there, Mr. Vanderleyde and Mr. Wheatley, are watching you very closely."

The speaker dragged a chair up to the table. He reached over and dropped Brett's automatic into one of the drawers of the desk.

"I have underrated you, Philip Brett," he confessed, sorrowfully. "It is very sad, but I shall have to pay the penalty. I shall have to deny myself the one recreation in this dull city of yours to which I was looking forward. This establishment, which I had hoped to find a harbour of refuge, will probably have to close its doors."

Brett slowly subsided into the chair against which he had been leaning.

"Do you mind my pointing out that as, according to your instructions, I am unarmed," he said, "there is no need for Mr. Wheatley and Mr. Vanderleyde to keep their guns in that unpleasantly horizontal position. Those hair triggers are infernally sensitive."

Mr. Solomon waved his hand.

"Never take your eyes off my little friend," he directed his two companions. "I do not altogether trust him even now. On the other hand, he will probably feel more at his ease if you do as he suggests."

The two men came a step or two nearer, but lowered their guns. Mr. Vanderleyde, whose manners and courtesy downstairs had earned him many compliments, sank into an easy-chair, with his automatic upon his knee.

"I think you're wrong, Chief," he said. "I have always had a presentiment that this little man might bring us trouble."

"I'm so glad you've come," she confided. "There's something wrong about the place to-night."

Mr. Wheatley coughed hoarsely.

"I should get rid of him," he wheezed. "Put the fear of God into them at the Yard. Nothing like starting as you mean to go on!"

Mr. Solomon reflected for a moment.

"No," he decided. "I'm very angry with you, Philip Brett—very angry with you indeed—but I don't think we can spare you just yet. I wonder if you realize what a nuisance you are? Solomon, Vanderleyde, and Wheatley here have been at least a month building up identities into which we were to slip whilst they disappeared, and here, on the very first night, you destroy our whole scheme. One up to you, Brett! I will confess that. In return, as a favour, as a very special favour, do tell me where I failed. Thirty seconds after you took that chair opposite me at the chemie table, you realized that I was not the Mr. Solomon of last night. What was wrong?"

"The eyes," Brett replied. "You took off your spectacles for a moment."

Mr. Solomon nodded in melancholy fashion. He turned towards his friends.

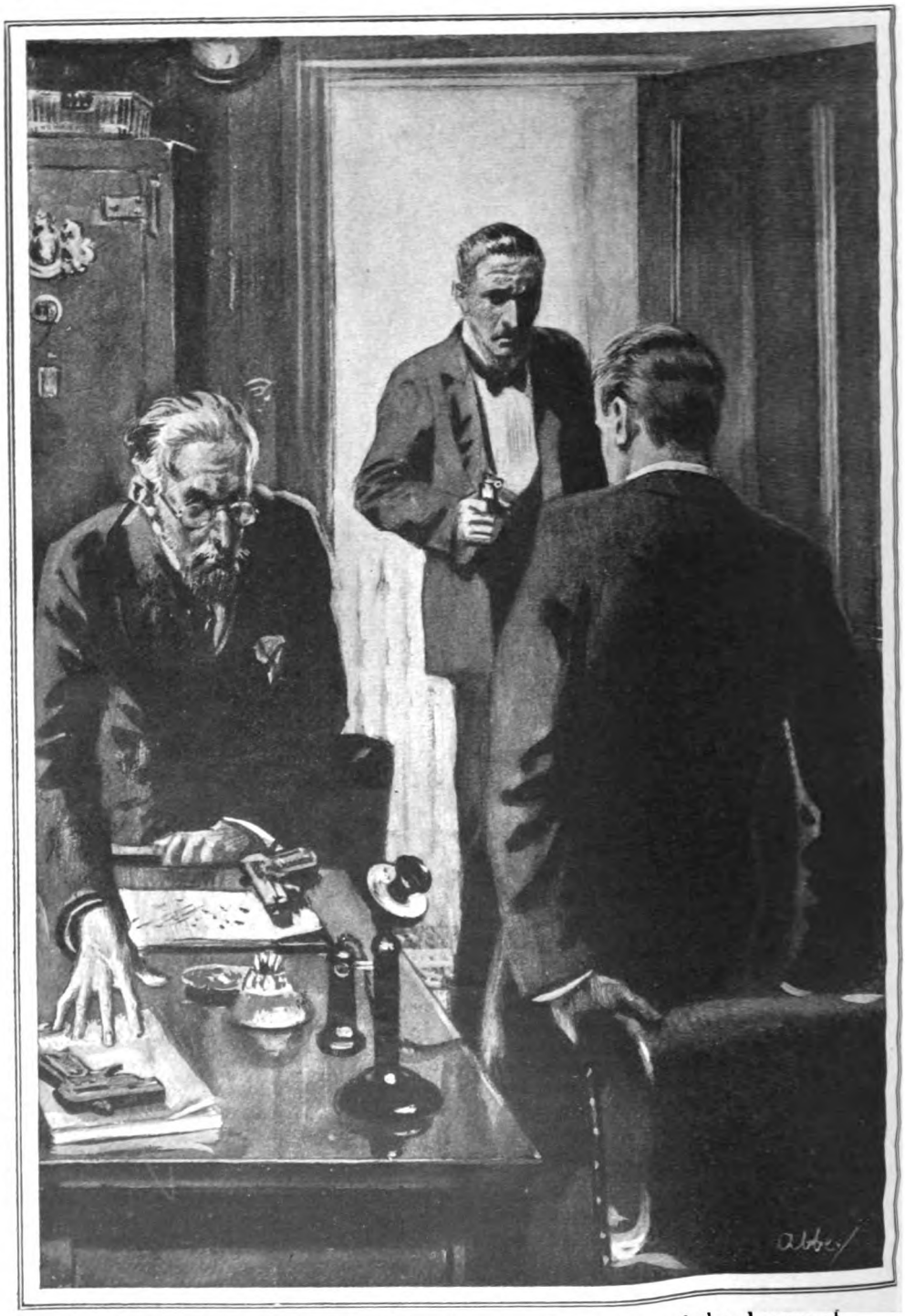
"What did I tell you?" he demanded. "Whatever you may think about him, and however you may be misled by his appearance, I contend that our young friend here is a very intelligent person. He will show us, I am sure—if we decide to give him the opportunity—plenty of sport. By the by, I noticed you at Victoria, Mr. Brett. It was very fortunate for us that you did not subject Lord Ellacott and Howson to the same—shall we call it 'inspired' scrutiny? You might seriously have interfered with our evening's work, as well as our pleasure. May I ask you why you are looking at the clock so often?"

Brett tapped with his fingers upon the table.

"To tell you the truth," he confided, "I was looking at the clock to see what time it was."

The quality of Mr. Solomon's smile became a trifle more sardonic.

"A pretty humour," he murmured. "For



He reached over and dropped Brett's automatic into one of the drawers of the desk.

the moment I was afraid that you were courting disappointment, that you were speculating as to the arrival of that posse of police."

Brett was conscious of a sudden sense of dismay. Mr. Solomon shook his head.

"Of course, you know," the latter continued, "that you were speaking into a house telephone. You got no nearer to four hundred Y than the housekeeper's room in the basement."

Brett was silent for a moment.

"The success of the evening does not lie entirely with me, then," he remarked.

"Not entirely," Mr. Solomon acknowledged. "We shall leave these premises in dignified fashion, and without hurry, certainly in more comfort than you had designed for us. Am I right in supposing that you can see the time from where you sit, Mr. Brett?"

"It is three o'clock."

Mr. Solomon rose to his feet. His two companions, whose eyes had watched Brett's every movement, were already on their way to the door.

"I take it," the former observed, "that you are too clever a man to attempt the impossible. At ten minutes past three you are free to descend to your friends, continue, if you will, your mild gambling, or communicate in any way you choose with Scotland Yard. If you attempt to leave this room by either door before then the result will be unfortunate. No, stay exactly where you are, please."

BRETT watched their retreating figures with anguish in his heart.

"Scarcely living up to your reputation, Matthew, are you?" he observed. "I thought that you never lost a chance of getting rid of an enemy."

Mr. Solomon turned back from the door with a faint smile at the corners of his lips, a smile which seemed somehow intensified by the deepening of the lines about his eyes.

"Philip Brett," he said, "if I thought that you were really an object of future danger to me, I should be regretfully compelled to participate in one of life's minor tragedies. You would be found here with your brains blown out—suicide after your losses at 'chemie,' of course, as many people would be ready to testify. I flatter myself, however, that I am an artist. I do nothing without necessity. If ever, as I have already warned you, the time should arrive when you really become dangerous, when the open way is not there behind, then I promise you that I would not hesitate—one, two, a dozen of you. I would kill as I kill flies, but not for the sake of killing. Be wise, my young friend. Stay where you are until that long hand is well over the ten minutes past the hour. Then you may open the door without fear."

They left the room, and in precisely ten minutes Brett followed them, conscious of retreating footsteps in the direction of the back stairs. The game was still in full progress below. Mr. Solomon—but, alas, not the same Mr. Solomon—was running a bank; Mr. Vanderleyde, without the bloodthirsty smile of his prototype, was cashing a cheque with the cashier; the perfect reproduction of Mr. Amos Wheatley was prowling round the table with hawk-like face. Lady Muriel rose from her seat and came to meet him.

"You seem a little dazed," she remarked, wonderingly. "Has anything happened?"

He shook his head.

"To-morrow," he confided, with a bitterness which no effort could conceal, "I am going to ask for my police-constable's uniform back again, and beg for a post as traffic inspector somewhere in the suburbs."

(Next month: "The Great West Raid.")

THE SILENT WITNESS

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
ELIZABETH EARNSHAW

AMONG the multitude of sayings that have been handed down by the old wise men of China, there is this :—

" When a woman discovers that her future husband is in possession of something that will disclose the secret of her past, she must smile and keep all terror from her eyes. Having for the moment thus disarmed suspicion, let her creep forth and steal it when the moon is hid. There are deeds and thoughts in the lives of women which shake the faith of the most devoted men. They should be flung into the waters of the Swift River to be swept unrecoverably into the Open Sea."

At the moment when George Ringwood picked out an undeveloped photographic spool from the mass of his brother's furniture and read " Pictures of an angel ; Monte Carlo, February, 1926," these words of ancient Chinese philosophy and warning slipped from Ann Reveley's subconscious mind and prevented her from snatching it away and throwing it into the fire.

The future Lady Ringwood, it happened also that this girl was the angel in that telltale reel, the sight of whom, when those snapshots were developed, would shake the faith of the man to whom she had been proud to give the first and last of her love.

Sir George Ringwood balanced the spool in his long, thin hand—one which held the portfolio of a Cabinet post in the British Government. A firm and honest hand. He said, with extraordinary interest, " By Jove ! Monte Carlo, February, 1926 ? The place, the year, and the month of my brother's ghastly crash. There's history in these pictures. I've often wondered who the woman was in that ugly chapter. I'm tempted to take them into the village and have them developed at once."

Keeping the terror from her eyes in the proper Chinese way, Ann forced a smile and held herself in control. " I should," she said ; " why not ? I have to go to the village to leave my dog with the vet. I'll take the spool if you like."

It seemed to her that her heart stopped while she waited for his reply. If, without arousing suspicion, she could so obtain possession of that silent witness to her part in young Ringwood's ghastly crash, there would be no need to creep forth and steal it when the moon was hid. Its evidence would be destroyed and her complicity wiped out.

" Will you, darling ? " said Ringwood. " A most excellent idea."

But just as he was about to put it into her eager hand his attention was caught by a battered leather case that was lying on the floor. He picked it up and opened it.

" Look. The Mons medal, the M.C., and the Croix de Guerre."

He forgot the spool and his curiosity. He was stirred to a blazing pride.

" Whose are they ? " she asked. Her eyes were on the spool.

" My brother's. His record during the War."

" How do they come to be here ? "

" But all these things are his. I've been able to persuade him to dig up his roots in South Africa. He's coming home to make his headquarters with me. He's going to live in this cottage."

If he had looked at his future wife at that moment he would have seen more than terror in her eyes.

" With immense pleasure I have collected his lares and penates, and I'm going to put them in order before the boy comes back. I shall enjoy the job." He spoke with emotion, and added, " I've not yet told him that I'm going to be married. I'm saving that until I see him. Noel is the right

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and proper person to be best man to me. He will be surprised and, of course, delighted when he finds that I, the confirmed bachelor, have had the luck to win so beautiful a wife."

He put his arm round the shoulder of the panic-stricken girl. He wouldn't have been a bachelor if he had met her earlier.

They were standing in a charming cottage in which an old housekeeper, pensioned by Ringwood after thirty years' service in Frimley Manor House, had lived for a considerable time. The good lady had lately come to the end of a very faithful life.

The cottage was thatched and old, and its beams were black with age. Recently repaired by tender hands, it was now in admirable order, screened from prying eyes by a six-foot hedge and many trees, set down in a garden such as only England knows. It was within a stone's throw of the Manor House which Ann, until that moment, had looked upon as home. Many times she had seen the cottage chimneys through the trees, and on her arrival from London that morning had told herself how useful it would be for an overflow of guests.

As Noel's it now became a menace.

"When is he coming?" she asked, trying to steady her voice.

"Early next week." He pocketed the spool in an absent-minded way. "In his last letter he wrote that he would probably put in two or three days in London. He has several people to see. Will you help me to arrange his things?"

"Yes, of course I will."

It was amazing that she could smile.

"I have work to do this morning and so must tear myself away."

He led her through the muddle of furniture and out into the lovely garden of the rambling old house which had been one of the numerous hiding-places of the youthful Charles II. Would he have held her arm with such a loving touch if he had known that it was she who had driven his brother to attempted suicide, as that spool could prove?

As tall and thin as the political caricatures in the papers made him out to be, and with a profile rather like that of Dante, Ringwood, even in his youth, had been an idealist. It required no great gift of psychology to see that he was one of those rare and valuable men who are ordained to become the leaders of forlorn hopes and causes bound to be lost. At Oxford his scholarship and athletics had carried him into the ephemeral fame of University life. He had rowed in the boat and been President of the Union, and had made the name of Ringwood stand for the almost mediæval knighthood of ascetic youth.

As he walked along the well-weeded paths of that secluded oasis in which he found occasional peace, there was still something of boyish enthusiasm and incorruptible duty on a face now stamped with lines of disillusion and anxiety and the humiliations, inevitable to a sensitive soul, that had been caused by long association with party politics.

He had looked older than his years and tired before he had met and fallen in love with the girl whose flippancies and modern levities had crumbled at the sight of him. Now, with his arm round her shoulder and his distinguished, monk-like figure thrown up against the background of an old yew hedge, he was renewed, re-inspired, rejuvenated as a tree is after a long winter when spring has touched its heart.

He had pinned his faith upon the bosom of this girl like a bunch of violets plucked freshly from the open spaces of a wood.

"I hope you will help me to put my brother on his feet," he said. "He will need us both. He was only twenty-one, you see, when he was flung into the mud and horrors of the trenches, a junior officer in the R.F.A. He went through those dreadful years with the false gaiety and peculiar humour without which the youth of this country must have broken down. He was wounded twice, and when he emerged into a peace fuller of hostility than the War itself he suffered from that abrupt let-down which left so many of our lads at a dangerous loose end. I don't know who the woman was, but she was mostly responsible for the moral and spiritual shock that put him on the edge of death in 1926. He loved her as he proved, poor boy, and in a reckless attempt to cover her with jewels lost all his own money and far more than I could afford to give him at the time."

He paused, and his voice went into a lower note. "You may call it sympathy, something that is carried on the vibrations of brother love, or whatever else you like. The fact remains that here one morning I received so strong a wireless message of despair that I drove to London, flew to Paris, and dashed to Monte Carlo in what seemed to be a most lethargic train. He was lying in a hospital suffering from a self-inflicted wound. By the grace of God his hand had trembled."

Ann shuddered and closed her eyes. She would never forget that moment when, sitting over breakfast in the bedroom of her hotel, the rumour had been brought of young Ringwood's suicide. She had egged him on the night before, without knowing or caring how near he was to desperation, and had laughed when he had blurted out the fact that he was broke.

"Since then," continued Ringwood, looking at the battered leather case with admiration and respect, "the poor lad has wandered about, trying to find his feet. I'm thankful to say that he has. Through some strange slant of heredity he has found himself through the medium of a pen. He has written a couple of novels—strong and painful things, it seems to me—which have brought him recognition and enabled him to become independent of what he calls my bounty—not the right word. I would have given him the greater part of everything I owned. And now he's coming back, coming home, has asked me for the cottage in which he may do his work, and there is all his furniture, some of it used at Oxford and the rest from the London rooms in which he used to live. He will find not one devoted friend but two. I know that I shall not have to ask you to be kind."

Ringwood's secretary met them on the terrace—a nice boy with a serious face and a humorous mouth. All the best that Oxford can give a man—tradition and inspiration and example—was stamped upon him. It was his duty to remind his chief that the moment was approaching when he received, while out of town, the daily report from his Government office.

"I am ready," Ringwood said. It was the motto of his life.

HE left Ann Reveley in a state of mental chaos.

Within the space of an hour the whole of what had appeared to be a secure and splendid future had collapsed like a frail building under a hurricane. The old boring lines, hurled so often at her head as a child by the Duchess of Scarborough, who was her aunt, came into her mind and triumphed: "Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive." In the hope that she could wipe out all that she had done as a member of the young undisciplined gang she had told George nothing. She had been afraid even to hint at the fact that she had ever met his brother.

It would have been easy enough to tell. The War had left in its wake a looseness which had affected girls as well as boys. He knew that. And if, after he had asked her to be his wife, she had been frank as to her brief connection with Noel and deplored the condition of mind in which she had been at that time, there would have been nothing to hide, nothing to fear.

In that moment of panic it seemed to her that she must either break off her engagement without explanation and go to her mother in Paris, or hang on in a cowardly nightmare until Noel enjoyed a belated revenge and told the truth to George. In which case the engagement might be broken off by him.

This girl was still very young. She had emerged from school under the wing of a giddy mother and passed into the younger generation of London which had no respect for laws. For two years she had treated life as though it were a circus. She had danced, raced, fooled, turned night into day, and conformed, with immense glee, to the masterly carelessness of those who had a superabundance of leisure and the itch to paint it red.

But the shock at Monte Carlo had sent her fool's cap flying. She had returned with her mother to London a different girl. She knew that she had played a rotten game by pretending to be in love with Noel and in egging him on to spend night after night at the tables in order that he might buy her something expensive to wear. She had realized then, for the first time, what it was to possess a conscience and to be chilled again and again by the fancied echo of a revolver-shot in the quiet of the night. Then came her meeting with George Ringwood. The elderly, white-haired Duchess, the last of the old *régime*, took her to tea on the Terrace of the House of Commons, and even before she had been introduced and had watched him among a heterogeneous crowd, aloof and disembodied with his Dante face, something had touched her heart—a sympathy, an admiration, a respect, a desire to protect and serve and refresh. He was a modern Don Quixote tilting at political windmills with an idealistic lance. Her imagination was fired. All the fine stuff that she had inherited and so completely suppressed came to the top that day. She was amazed and overjoyed to find that Ringwood, the ascetic, answered to her call.

From that moment, with a sense of responsibility hitherto unknown, she had turned her back on the roundabout and looked honestly at life.

In Ringwood's case history had repeated itself, as it always does. Having spent his working hours with his eyes on his job, he had crashed at the sight of the girl who had brought to life his adolescent dreams. There was now a competition between them as to who was the more in love.

The discovery of the spool and the approaching return of Noel threw the shadow of disaster over both their lives.

Before going down to the village, which lay snugly in a dip about a mile from the house, Ann went to the window of Ringwood's study. He was speaking into the telephone from the notes that had been put on his desk. She waited in the hope that he might see her and wave his hand. He was instantly aware of her presence, but with

The smile that passed over his face when he joined her at the window paid the girl a tribute that warmed her heart.

characteristic concentration finished the business in hand before making any sign. The smile that passed over his face when he joined her at the window paid the girl a tribute that warmed her heart.

"I have two hours' work," he said, touching her cheek. "What will you do? Take your dog to the vet?"

"Yes," she said; "his nose is hot and he's very much off his feed."

Would he remember that she had volunteered to take the spool? No. He had forgotten its existence. She dared not ask.

He kissed her and let his hand linger on her shoulder. Then he turned, switched his mind back to his work, and commenced to dictate again.

AND so, having collected her dog, Ann went down to the old gates and into the road. Beyond the common, which was deserted by everything but rabbits and peppered with the first young shoots of bracken, the Surrey hills stood clearly against a sky in which a series of white and friendly clouds were arranged in a decorative pattern. A community of crows were discussing a subject of immense importance in the wood to the left. Braving the wrath of its rightful owner—a disagreeable man—half-a-dozen village boys were fishing in a large pond from surreptitious places. Lumbering farm carts dragged by patient horses proceeded about their business under the grumbling care of men who spent their lives in perpetual warfare against Nature, whose moments of kindness are rare.

There was a Rising Sun at one end of the village and a Setting Sun at the other, and both these inns were rivalled in the middle of it by the George and Crown and the Cat and Fiddle. There was no possibility of its inhabitants being put to the slightest inconvenience in the quenching of a thirst.

As Ann went down the High Street, with its picturesque conglomeration of Elizabethan and Georgian houses, hats were tipped as she passed. As much for her own sake as for the reason that she was going to be the châtelaine of the Manor House, her appearance caused a certain excitement among the housewives who were out to do their marketing—carefully, because money was scarce—and the younger people who were congregated in the long winding street. Many of the latter were gathered about the cinema theatre, with its sensational advertisements.

The dog, a highly intelligent and usually merry Sealyham, was as glad to be in the hands of the doctor as a sick human being. The smell of medicine and the expert touch of the cheerful vet gave him confidence.

"What's his name? Jimmy? And a good name, too. There's nothing much the matter. Eating too much. We all do that. He'll be as right as rain in a couple of days, I think."

Hearing which, Jimmy rubbed his hot nose against his mistress's hand, selected a basket which wasn't occupied, and gave a sheepish grin. He said as plain as a pikestaff, "I'm not going to die, after all. Don't you worry, old dear."

Before going home—was it home any longer?—Ann wandered aimlessly from one end of the street to the other. Without the slightest interest, but in order to kill time, she gazed into the shop windows. Under happier conditions she would have been hugely amused at the cheap jewellery, the machine-made garments for women labelled "The latest style," the efforts on the part of tobacconists to offer temptation to callow youth, the rather feeble attempts to imitate American methods of display on the part of furniture dealers, the makers of radio sets, and the people who sold sewing machines and labour-saving implements. She stood for some time outside a second-hand bookshop in which there were hundreds of shabby and damaged volumes, the favourites at one time of people who had failed or died—and in the latter case had been spared, luckily, from seeing their things sold for anything they would fetch and the break-up of their old surroundings. The books were novels for the most part, cheaply-bound sets of Dickens and Thackeray and of authors who had never made a mark. Mixed up among them were early editions of the Encyclopædia, bound copies of forgotten magazines, collections of sermons over which gradually dwindling congregations had fallen fast asleep, and poems by beardless boys and grey-headed women which were nothing but the very faint echoes of Browning, Swinburne, and Henley. They filled her with sadness. They stood as the symbols of shame, desertion, and broken homes.

Finally, after an aimless waste of time, Ann retraced her steps, passed over the bridge, and faced the road which led through open country to the Manor House. For a quarter of a mile there was a breath-taking view of a sweeping valley, every rod of which in pre-War days had been in farmers' hands. Now, owing to the rising tide of people, there were great patches covered with small and precisely similar houses, built so close together that the occupants of one could hear everything that was done by the occupants of another.

In terror and despair she entered the garden of the old house through a side gate which had been made by Ringwood so that

he might escape unobserved when certain of his neighbours, with whom he had nothing in common, insisted on paying calls. It was in this part of the garden that he kept a collection of prize bantams in which he took infinite pleasure. It was here, too, that he spent as much time as he could among his favourite roses.

A youngish man, with a face that went into uncontrollable twitches, was digging as Ann went slowly along. He had been shell-shocked during the War, and even now had not wholly recovered from the horror and degeneracy of that ghastly event. He was one of the numerous wrecks to whom Ringwood had given employment as a practical mark of gratitude for the fact that his only brother had come through safe and sound.

As she passed between high yew hedges cut into fantastic shapes, she was surprised to hear Ringwood's voice. He spoke with a note of unusual excitement. She heard his rare laugh and wondered who was with him. Arrived at a gap through which were framed the rolling lawns of the main garden, she saw the tall, slight, soldierly figure of the man who had been so desperately in love with her less than a year before—the man who had attempted to put a bullet through his brain under an indifferent moon.

In her present state of cowardice—natural because the whole of her future happiness was at stake—she was inclined to turn away and bolt. Luck was dead against her. By arriving before his time Noel had done away with her chance to pull herself together and take what desperate steps she could to fling her secret into the waters of the Swift River and throw herself on Noel's mercy before he saw his brother. But she was seen immediately by Ringwood, who waved his hand and called her name, and then, with an affectionate gesture, put his arm round his brother's shoulder and led him across the lawn.

She waited for the brothers to join her. She was unable to take a step. A sweep of physical weakness seized her so that she trembled at the knees. The climax of this unexpected turn of events would be brought about at once by Noel's recognition. The amazed George would ask for an explanation, and then the thin walls of her deception must go down with a crash.

She heard George say proudly, " Darling, here's the boy I told you about. He arrived yesterday and couldn't stay away. Noel, old boy, here is my future wife, who is going to be a very good friend of yours."

But to her intense surprise, Noel held out his hand like a stranger—a courteous and interested stranger, a man who seemed to be predisposed to like her for his brother's sake.

He said, " How do you do? When I saw you in the gap I thought that one of the flowers had come to life." He laughed, and added by way of apology for his grandiloquence, " Probably George has told you that I write."

She managed to murmur something and join in the laugh, but when she took his hand it was icy and with an antagonistic touch.

George was boyishly happy. It was one of the great moments of his life to show Ann, his proudest possession, to the only man in the world who had the remainder of his love. He was overjoyed, also, to find that Noel had completely recovered from the hysterical indecision in which he had seen him last. Physical and mental fitness was stamped all over him.

During what she could only imagine was a temporary reprieve, Ann heard almost nothing of what was said. George's gaiety and high spirits added tragedy to the situation, as did the fact that Noel was playing a part. In his first searching look she saw not only contempt and dislike, but something which seemed to her to show his quick decision to rescue his brother from a life of unhappiness.

Presently George said, " I must leave you two. I have one more letter to dictate before I chuck my job for the day. Go in to lunch if you're frightfully hungry. If not, wait for me."

Before turning away and hurrying back to his room he put his arm round Noel's shoulder and Ann's trembling hand to his lips.

NOTHING was said until George had disappeared. And then Noel Ringwood turned to the girl for whom he had run amuck. In both his books—strange and painful as George had called them—he had let her have it under fictional names. He had used her as a sort of Aunt Sally and had flung at her head all the cynicism and bitterness of a disillusioned man. He had made her out to be the typical smart flapper, the super flapper, and had held her up to such biting ridicule that many of the mothers and fathers who had read his books had been impelled, although they recognized the uncomfortable veracity of his vicious portraits, to expostulate in letters to the Press.

With the most astounding frankness and cruelty, he said, " I would rather see my brother dead than married to you."

To which Ann replied, " If you have grown out of *your* idiocy, do you suppose that I haven't of mine? "

" Oh, I see, you're going to put up a fight."

" To the very last ditch," she said.

The man looked at her with a trifle more respect. He found that her wild loveliness had grown into ordered beauty. He was astonished to see that, like himself, she had rounded the corner of youth and had come out into the open. "All right, then," he said; "I may as well say at once that my immediate job is to rescue my brother from you. It's the simplest thing I've ever had to do."

"Is it? How?" she asked.

"He told me about the spool. I have it in my pocket. He's a man who detests deceit. All I have to do is to develop these snapshots and without a word of explanation put them in his hand."

"Are you going to do that merciless thing without giving me a chance?"

"A chance! I don't think you deserve it."

"You may not. But common decency and sportsmanship demand that you shall discover what love has done for me."

In the wild places of the country in which he had spent his recovering years he had come across animals whose legs had been caught in a trap. This girl had the same look in her eyes.

"Under the most civilized stucco," he said, "as you are well aware, there is a touch of barbarism. There have been many moments since I last saw you—sleepless moments usually—during which I've caught myself gloating over certain schemes of revenge. The fact that you're a woman doesn't make it necessary any longer for me to let you off. That sort of sentimentality undermines the law and the whole of social life. To be brutally frank, I can see no reason why a woman shouldn't take her medicine as a man is forced to do. After all, you're emancipated, and have won equality. Why immediately begin with an out-of-date appeal for mercy on the strength of your being a woman? You can't have it both ways. As I said before, my job is to save my brother, who is an idealist. Love doesn't alter nature, and yours, as you proved so clearly, is callous and self-indulgent. I can see nothing but Hell for George with you as his wife."

What was Ann to say? There she was standing in the spring of 1927. Even in that quiet garden she had only to strain her ears to hear the roar of modernism. She had driven that morning out of a city in which, as in every other, men and women walked on the same level, faced the same problems. There was, as Noel had said, no remaining chivalry between the sexes. Feminine tears were no longer a tyranny. Women no longer swooned and had the megrims. All the pretty weaknesses of the old days had been swept away. She accepted that. They must fight with the same weapons.

And so she said, "All right, but if you're going to be fair in this matter—as fair as you'd be to a man—hold your hand over the week-end. Give me the rest of the day and all to-morrow in which to prove that love *has* altered my nature. It's the only thing that does, because it puts one on one's mettle and brings out the best that is in one. If by Monday morning you come to the conclusion that I am still as callous and self-indulgent as I was in Monte Carlo, then take what steps you like. Will you go as far as that?"

"Yes," he said, "I will. I want to be perfectly fair. I must ask you to remember, however, that there is no man living for whom I have so great a respect and devotion as I have for my brother. Shall we go back to the house?"

"Yes," she said, "if you like."

And they walked along the winding paths together in apparent amity.

THE iron tonic which had been injected into her by Noel had been good for Ann. She had fighting blood in her veins. Her fear and cowardice disappeared, just as, at the beginning of the War, national ailments gave way when self-protection demanded the supreme physical and mental effort. All that she had to do, it appeared to her, was to be perfectly natural, to show the man who held the sword of Damocles that she was worthy of his brother's love, and that, by the grace of God and her inherited traditions, she was really and truly ready to serve, protect, refresh, and rejuvenate as she had pledged herself to do. Not easy, when the man who was her antagonist had trembled on the edge of death because of her adolescent bolshevism, and remembered her only as one of the ornaments of the young undisciplined gang. "I trust in my own soul," she said to herself, using the words of Browning, "that can perceive the outward and the inward, Nature's good and God's."

They were extraordinary hours that followed. It would have seemed absurd and impossible to George or to the equable and discreet Mrs. Vansittart, who acted as chaperon, that there was a vivid human drama which might end in tragedy going on in that peaceful old house. Over and over again during the rest of that lovely day George told his brother and Ann how extremely happy he was. The two people who meant more to him than any in the world were together under his roof, permanently in his life. "I can imagine," he said, "absolutely nothing so delightful, or for which I can thank God with such

"All I have to do is to develop these snapshots and without a word of explanation put them in his hand."

deep gratitude." And yet, during all these hours, wearing the sophisticated mask of friendship and mutual liking, his brother and his future wife were carrying on their fight.

No better proof could have been provided as to Ann's inherent grit than her behaviour then. She "carried on" in the way in which her brother and every man in his regiment had done in the trenches, faced

by an enemy always on the alert. She knew that her every word and every gesture and almost every expression were being watched by Noel; that he was putting her through the closest dissection and sizing her up with the keen anxiety of one whose desire it was to save his brother from falling into a pit. It was perfectly obvious that he could see her only as the young and untamed creature with whom he had been so passionately in love in the Monte Carlo days. She had much to live down, she knew, and the only way she could do it was by being simple and sincere and by letting him see for himself not only how much she meant to George but how much he meant to her.

She was greatly helped in this. George himself was more boyish and naive than she had ever seen him before. In a multitude of ways he made it clear that he was well, most splendidly well; that he had, in fact, taken on a new lease of life. In everything that he said and did he showed his brother that he was able, because of Ann and her inspiration, sympathy, and understanding, to attack his numerous problems with more optimism and less nervous tension than in former times.

But it was not until after dinner on Sunday that Noel, who had never once spoken to Ann except in front of his brother, made an announcement which threw her into the climax of despair.

Standing in front of the log fire in the dimly lit library he said suddenly, "It appears that Mumford, your butler and Admirable Crichton, is an amateur photographer of no mean worth. That being so, I think it might be rather good fun if I withdrew for half an hour and developed this funny old spool. I know that both of you are frightfully curious to find out who the woman was who presented me with my ticket to some Western place from which there's no return." He laughed, looked straight at Ann, and added, "What do you think?"

"A good idea," said Ann lightly, fighting to the last ditch, as she had said she would.

"An excellent notion," said George.

Wearing a curious smile in which that wretched girl thought that she saw the essence of revenge, Noel took the spool out of his pocket, flung it into the air, caught it, and made for the door with a long and easy stride.

George watched him go with great affection and pride. He had put aside, over that happy week-end, the heavy load of trouble which the Government had to bear—unemployment, the Chinese mess, the deep antagonism of the Labour party. Monday would find him back again in Whitehall, all the more ready to accept his share of these burdens because there was joy in his house.

He drew Ann close to his heart and held her there.

He said gravely, with the utmost tenderness and admiration, "Darling, in the very near future, when you belong to me by law as well as by spirit, you will come to a home in which there will be harmony and exultation. I shall have the blessing of your love, and Noel the benefit of your friendship. At the end of every day we shall, all three, face the approaching darkness and cry out, "Pass, Night, all's well."

She stood on tiptoe and kissed him. She was too frightened to be able to trust herself to speak.

He went on again after a moment. "It isn't always that a man's brother is looked upon with sympathy by his wife. There is sometimes a curious resentment and jealousy—I've noticed that. To my inexpressible delight I can see that you and Noel have established an understanding and a conformity of temperament."

In saying this he paid an unconscious tribute to the extraordinary self-restraint which these two had succeeded in maintaining during all those hours of torture.

What was to be the end?

The talk remained one-sided because Ann dared not join in. All she could do was to cling to this good man with what was, it seemed to her, a final expression of love and wait for the sword to fall. The loud ticking of the old clock marked off second by second of the probation which Noel had granted, and during this brief time she listened, like one in a dream, to George's tender words.

FINALLY Noel returned.

The same smile was on his lips with which he left the room. With a quick look from his brother to the girl he used to love he went to the fireplace and stood with his back to it.

"Well," asked George, "have you brought the result of your efforts?"

Noel looked straight at Ann.

"No," he said. "I must have let the light into the camera. Not a single shot comes out."

George went up to the window. A new moon lay on its back.

"I'm rather glad," he said.

As he turned Noel dropped the unbroken spool into the hottest part of the fire.

"You win," he said to Ann.

THIS ASTOUNDING CASE IS FACT—NOT FICTION.

CASES FROM MY CRIME-BOOK

THE "EYE OF THE POLICE."
Badge of Parisian Detectives.

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. XV. THE MURDERS IN THE DARKENED ROOM.

"I CAN pit myself against the criminals of this world," Monsieur Bertillon exclaimed angrily, "and have achieved some few passable results, but when it comes to fighting a ghost or a spirit, why, I am afraid anthropometrical photographs, finger-prints, and the like are useless. Even your friend Bannister's ·45 automatic, of which he is so fond, would be of no avail. And from what I hear the ghost used a knife with deadly effect!"

"You are joking, sir, of course," I said, surprised at the outburst.

"No, my friend, I am serious! From what Rousseau reports, a man was killed at a spiritualistic séance yesterday. Here is his report. Listen to this:—

"'Last night eight people assembled at the house of Paul Canette, a medium, in the Villa Plaisance at Neuilly. The séance was organized by a woman named Madame Lafargue, who, it seems, has great faith in the medium's powers and arranged for several sittings. This Canette has been repeatedly exposed for fraud, nevertheless there are still many who believe in him. The lights were turned out as usual, and the eight people sat with their hands on a round table. Nothing happened for a time, then, quite unexpectedly, for Canette does not profess to be a direct voice medium, a loud voice was heard speaking in Spanish. Apparently no one there understood Spanish. A choking cry followed upon the message, which was quite short. Then there was a crash and a heavy fall. Someone instantly switched on the lights. The medium was unconscious and lying sideways in his chair, to which he had been bound, whilst a man named Janos sprawled on the floor. He was dead, and the handle of a queer dagger protruded from his breast.' Now what do you think of that?"

"The sitting was not genuine, of course, and one of the persons present stabbed the man, an easy matter in the dark."

"Oh, that is your opinion, is it? Well, we shall see. The police were at once called,

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and the names of the sitters taken. They are all well-known and respectable people. They were searched and have been detained pending my investigation. The premises were also explored. The medium appeared to be in a state of collapse, and had to be carried to his bedroom, where a doctor is attending him. Since the murdered man was quite dead, he was left where he fell and the door immediately locked. A gendarme has remained on guard. The medium was only brought to his senses after much trouble. He swears that he was in a trance and remembers nothing. Now get your outfit; we are going there at once."

I sprang eagerly to my feet, for long experience had taught me that when Monsieur Bertillon consented to investigate in person, it was because his *flair* had sensed an unusual crime.

THE SCENE OF THE MYSTERY.

THE Villa Plaisance, in the street of that name at Neuilly, was remarkable as a vestige of the days when the suburb had been composed only of country houses standing in their own grounds. The usual Parisian mansion had replaced most of these, but the villa still boasted a paved forecourt enclosed by heavy iron railings and gates. The rear of the building was only separated from the lofty trees of the Bois de Boulogne by the tram-lines of the service connecting Neuilly with St. Cloud.

Rousseau had been lounging in the hall awaiting our arrival, and at once led the way up wide handsome stairs to the first floor.

The presence of a gendarme, standing stiffly erect before double oaken doors, indicated that it was the room where the tragedy had occurred.

"I have sent for the people who were here last night," Rousseau said. "According to your instructions, Chief, they are detained in separate rooms and are being brought in closed cars, one at a time, so that they cannot communicate with each other. An officer will remain with them when they arrive. My report was necessarily short, but nothing has been moved, the windows have remained closed, and the servants are guarded by my men. During the séance the doors were locked on the inside, but the key remained in the lock."

"I see," said Monsieur Bertillon, thoughtfully. "Is it a hollow key?"

"No; the end could have been gripped by those special pliers which are designed to fit into keyholes."

"You call them *ouistiti*, don't you?" Bertillon asked with a smile. "You have one, of course?"

"Naturally, monsieur, I always carry my tools."

"Well, then, when I am in the room, I'll lock the door again. Open it as a burglar would. I wish to ascertain whether the people sitting with the medium could have heard the noise."

"That doesn't fit in with your theory that the murder was committed by a spirit," I hazarded.

"No, I know that, but when I investigate I naturally slip into the groove of firmly established habits. Besides, I don't believe that those who live on another plane, if there is such a thing, can come back to harm us. All right, Rousseau, I see there are no marks or scratches on the door. Open it carefully. I want to visualize the scene."

The atmosphere of the room was well calculated to impress the senses. A black velvet portière was draped in heavy folds before the door, and curtains of the same material covered the window. The lofty ceiling was also painted black, but on its surface glittered silver stars and a crescent moon. A thick carpet deadened our footfalls, and when I pulled one of the curtains aside I saw that heavy shutters were locked across the inside of the window. A faint breath of Oriental perfume lingered in the air and added its note of strangeness. When Monsieur Bertillon closed the door we stood in a darkness and silence so complete that had it not been for the pounding of my heart and the drumming of the blood in my ears I could have believed myself dead and buried. It was the rayless night of the grave, and the thought that the victim of a crime committed only a few hours since still lay on the floor made me shiver with superstitious dread. Involuntarily I snapped on the light from my pocket torch and stepped towards the switches.

Monsieur Bertillon turned impatiently and motioned me to wait. "I have a reason for standing in the dark for a moment," he said, "but I admit it is not pleasant. Well, switch on all the lamps now. You need not trouble to test the door, Rousseau. It's clear no sound can penetrate to this room."

WHAT HAND STRUCK THE BLOW?

I NEEDED no second bidding and flooded the place with welcome light. There were several bracket lamps and a central chandelier, but all were controlled by switches near the door. Oriental stools and inlaid octagonal tables were scattered about, for the room was very large, and the centre was occupied by a massive circular table of polished mahogany. Around this were several chairs, two of which had been

The knife with which the murders were committed.

overturned. Lying in a twisted position on the ground, one leg still entangled in the crossbars of a chair, was the murdered man.

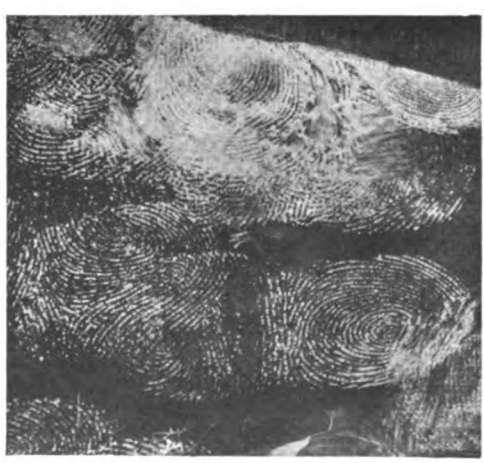
The long, narrow haft of a knife, which glittered as I moved forward, projected from the breast just above the heart and indicated clearly how he had been killed. A pool of blood had soaked into the carpet, and one hand and cuff were stained darkly crimson. The man was middle-aged, with a round, fleshy face and short moustache. This and his glossy black hair somehow gave him a swarthy southern appearance. He was dressed in evening clothes and a handsome ring sparkled on his bloodstained hand. I saw that the handle of the weapon was of ebony inlaid with gold in a curious design. It was the gleam from this which had caught my eye. The ends of a long, thin rope, cut in several places, were dangling from the back and sides of an arm-chair on the opposite side of the table. This was evidently where the medium had sat, bound in the usual manner. Just behind this chair was a square cabinet formed by two columns, one white and one black, supporting a wooden canopy, from which ample velvet curtains were suspended. At a sign from Bertillon I tugged at a silken cord looped over a hook in the wall, and the curtains swung noiselessly aside, disclosing a round stool covered with withered flowers.

"Go carefully to work," Monsieur Bertillon cautioned me; "that table with its polished surface will be like an open book to us. Spray the chairs also, but let me look at the marks before you transfer them to your gelatine slips."

When I had completed my task we saw that the sitters had left the imprints of their finger-tips clearly traced, at equal distances. Those who sat at each side of the medium had only rested one hand on the table, and, curiously enough, in every case the print of the little finger was missing.

Bertillon nodded in a satisfied manner. "Yes—they linked their little fingers together and those next to the medium held his hands. That's good. Now number them in their order. See, there are long smudges and bloodstains where the murdered man sat. Those smudges were made when he jerked his hands away as he fell. What beats me is how the devil, with a table five feet in diameter in the way, any living being could stab him in front. H'm—take a flashlight photograph of the scene and then we will look at the man himself."

When this had been done Bertillon stooped and turned the body over. He started back instantly with a hoarse cry, "Good heavens! Look at this!" In the centre of the white shirt-front was the crimson impress of a hand, fingers wide apart, as though the murderer had deliberately planned to leave a clue to his identity. Rousseau stared at the ghastly token with dilated eyes, but almost at once his gaze narrowed.



Finger-prints taken from the mahogany table.

"I have been informed that not more than a minute elapsed before the lights were switched on," he cried. "How could a man have had time, in the dark, to leave that horrible mark with such accuracy? It looks like blood, too, but there would have been none on the carpet at the time the blow was struck, and the stains on the table do not appear to have been touched."

THE GHOSTLY FINGER-PRINTS.

WE stared at each other in silence for a minute. The same thought was in our minds. No living hand had left that sign. My gaze wandered round the sombre room, with its heavy draperies and

twinkling silver stars. The weight of a malevolent intelligence watching us mockingly oppressed me.

Bertillon straightened up and seized Rousseau by the arm.

" Have the people you detained had an opportunity of washing their hands ? " he snapped.

" Of course not, Chief. I saw to that ; and they were searched, too. I should have noticed a bloodstained hand at once."

Bertillon rested one knee on the floor and examined the knife with his lenses, then he measured the angle of the handle.

" Downwards, of course," he muttered. " A distinct slope. Well—take the weapon to the laboratory at once and test it for finger-prints. Cut out that mark also. I'll question the medium first and then the others."

The story as we pieced it together was that a wealthy lady, Madame Lafargue, who was known to be a zealous psychic investigator, had invited several friends and acquaintances to a sitting at the Villa Plaisance, in order to test the powers of the medium Paul Canette. Canette had created quite a stir in psychic circles when he first came to Paris, but several bad exposures of fraudulent practices had caused researchers to shun his place. There had been an acrimonious controversy in the papers as a result, for a few still believed that, although he had stooped to trickery, he was a true medium. It was in order to convince her friends of this that Madame Lafargue had arranged for the sitting. Canette had insisted that a member of the Press should be present, and had introduced a Monsieur Kurt Janos, as the representative of some obscure psychic paper.

Madame Lafargue had taken minute precautions against trickery. The carpet was lifted at the edges to see if there were any electric wires underneath, and it had been tacked down again firmly. The cabinet under the canopy was examined and the room carefully searched. The door was then locked and seals placed at the top and bottom, but the horror produced by the tragedy had been so overwhelming that naturally no one looked to see if these were intact before opening it.

Rafael Cortez.

Those placed on the window were unbroken, however. It was Madame Lafargue and the unknown pressman who had bound Canette to the chair. The switches were near the door, quite fifteen feet from the table, and Madame Lafargue had turned the lights out and had then taken her place next to Monsieur Janos. The medium immediately appeared to go into a trance, and his breathing became stertorous. For a time nothing had happened except that a few flowers had fallen on the table. Suddenly a harsh, loud voice, which to everyone's astonishment appeared to proceed from a distant corner of the room, cried, " Rafael Cortez ! Rafael Cortez ! "

MADAME LAFARGUE'S STORY.

" I AM sure that was the name," Madame Lafargue declared, firmly, " although the intonation was foreign. The letter 'o' notably was curiously sonorous, not like our French vowel sound at all. For a minute after this name had been called twice, there was silence. I was about to put a question to the Presence, when I felt a violent twitching at my right hand, which was linked to that of Monsieur Janos. Then abruptly there followed a rapid stream of words which sounded like Spanish, although I do not understand that language. There was no mistaking the tone, however. It was threatening and triumphant. As the voice ceased I noticed a faint greenish light over the table, and at the same instant the man next me gave a loud groan. His hand jerked upwards. I heard his chair crash against the table and a heavy thud on the carpet. We all shrieked with terror. Something terrible was happening in the dark, and I suppose that we all lost our heads for a moment. I remember that someone yelled, 'The lights! For God's sake, the lights ! ' At that I tried to feel my way towards the door, but my foot caught in the overturned chair and I fell. The same moment someone found the switches and I saw the man Janos lying on the ground with a dagger in his breast and his face streaked with blood. Oh, it was horrible, horrible ! "

This story was corroborated by the others. For a time no one had thought of the medium, who had either fainted with terror or was still in a trance. Then one of Madame Lafargue's friends had cut the ropes which bound him, and he was carried out and placed on a bed. Madame Lafargue had also with rare presence of mind ordered

everyone from the room, and sent for a doctor and the police. When the doctor reported that Monsieur Janos was dead, the commissaire had shut the room and telephoned to the Sûreté. Paul Canette's statement when he finally regained consciousness was that he had been in a trance. Whilst in that state he had vaguely felt that something evil had occurred, but what it was he did not know. The man was shaking with terror and almost hysterical, and the doctor diagnosed severe shock and suggested that a nurse should stay with Canette, besides the police officer who guarded him. When we had obtained these statements we returned to headquarters, leaving Rousseau at the Villa Plaisance to superintend the removal of the body. Two experts from the identity department also photographed those who had been on the premises when the murder was committed, and took their finger-prints.

Kurt Janos.

WHOSE FINGER-PRINTS?

I WORKED feverishly for the remainder of the day, and the next morning carried the result of my labours to Monsieur Bertillon.

"Well?" he queried sharply, as I entered and placed a series of enlargements I had made from the gelatine transfers on his table.

"The hand which drove home that knife was a large one," I said, "because only the edges of the first phalanges have left their trace on the handle, but they are indubitably the same as those on the linen. These are the photographs of the finger-tips I obtained from the table, and they correspond to those taken from the sitters by our men. I have also those of the medium. *None resembles the mark left on the shirt.*"

Monsieur Bertillon examined my work critically, then he motioned me to a seat.

"I expected something like this. But I admit I had vaguely suspected the medium. He was the only one who did not leave his signature on that polished table. It is true the man who cut the ropes declares that the knots were intact, but that of course proves nothing. Yet, clever though he may be, he could hardly yell from a corner of the room, find his way in the dark to the man at the table, kill him, steep his hand in blood, press it accurately on the linen, and slip into the ropes again before the lights were turned up. Besides, he would guess we should take an impress of his hands. He was not left an instant alone, and there was no sign of blood on them. So far, our only clue is the name Rafael Cortez. I have asked Dufresne to get me all the information he can about Paul Canette and the murdered man. Leave these photographs with me. The records shall investigate the past of all these people. Some may be going under assumed names. Colorbier is hunting up all the charts with names sounding like Cortez. Meanwhile, go to Neuilly and see if you can be of assistance to Colbert, who is searching the Villa Plaisance."

The imprint of Marinetti's hand in blood, found on the white shirt-front of Kurt Janos.

The Paris dailies had printed various fantastic versions of the crime, for Madame Lafargue and her friends had been released temporarily, although their movements were being watched, and several enterprising reporters had already interviewed them. The idea of supernatural agency was, of course, emphatically ridiculed and the medium more or less pointedly accused. I therefore expected to find the usual morbid crowd collected round the villa, but Colbert had placed plain-clothes officers on guard and their presence frightened away the curious. Colbert had completed his search when I arrived, and was about to leave.

"Nothing," he said, laconically, with an expressive gesture; "not a sign. It beats me. Rousseau is still with Canette, who is in a sullen mood, and sticks to his story that he knows nothing. In his room we found a curious photograph, which a cyclist has taken to headquarters, but that's all."

"I'll just have a look round all by myself, then," I said. "I can't sit still and wait. Let me know if I'm wanted." Colbert shrugged his shoulders and handed me the key of the séance room.

THE FACE AT THE DOOR.

THE servants were being questioned at the Quai des Orfèvres, and the house was silent and deserted. Once more I entered that sinister room. The body was no longer there, otherwise everything was the same. For an hour I crawled about the carpet with lamp and lenses, inspected the walls and curtains, and tested the locks on the shutters. I had my theory, and thrilled with a wild hope that where others had failed I might succeed. The black ceiling, with its silver stars and moon, fascinated me. I climbed the stairs to the next landing and found that above it was a large, sparsely furnished room with a bare floor, which looked promising and fitted in with my theory. Encouraged by this I inserted the blade of my knife between the boards, one by one, and tried to prise them loose. To my disgust they were all firmly nailed down. I was still on my knees examining the joints with my lenses, when instinct warned me that someone was watching my movements. Twisting sharply round, I was in time to see an evil, malignant face peering round the open door. It was instantly withdrawn, but I leaped simultaneously with its disappearance and caught a glimpse of a hunched shape as it slipped noiselessly into a room at the end of the passage. There was a scream in a woman's voice, and as I threw open the door Rousseau came running up the stairs. I perceived that it was the medium's bedroom. In a corner was the professional nurse the doctor had sent, with hands raised in terror, and the man who had spied on me, trying vainly to calm her fears. It was the medium Paul Canette, and now that I could examine him closely I was inclined to share the suspicions of the public. Two tiny, cunning eyes, with heavy, drooping lids, glared at me from under overhanging brows. The mouth, half hidden by a moustache, was cruel and vindictive, whilst the high, dome-like head, entirely bald, gave the man the appearance of a malevolent genius. The body was squat and muscular.

"Why were you watching me?" I demanded.

"I heard a noise. Since this terrible murder my nerves are strung to breaking point. The nurse was asleep, so I crept to the open door to see what was happening."

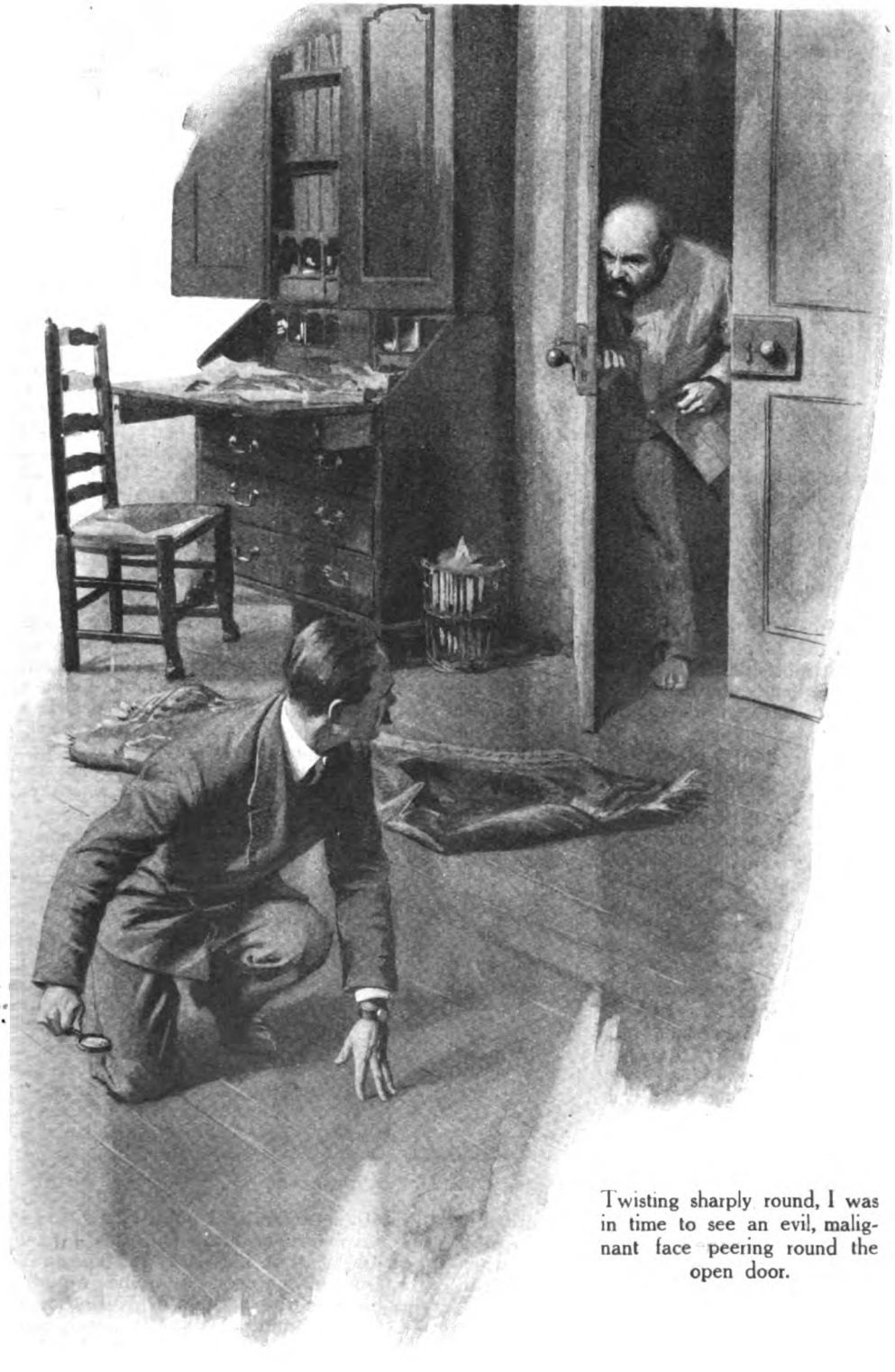
"I was not asleep," the nurse cried, indignantly; "I was sitting by the window reading. Suddenly when I looked up the bed was empty. I swear the door did not open. I was just going to call monsieur there, who had told me not to lose sight of my patient, when he slipped in like a shadow. I refuse to stay here alone again."

Rousseau looked at me meaningly.

"All right," he growled. "From now on I stay here and watch you, my fine fellow. You have learnt to move noiselessly, it appears. Well, see if you can trick *me*. Send one of the men up," he added to me in an undertone; "we'll relay each other."

I reported the incident to my chief, whom I found in consultation with Monsieur Dufresne and Colbert.

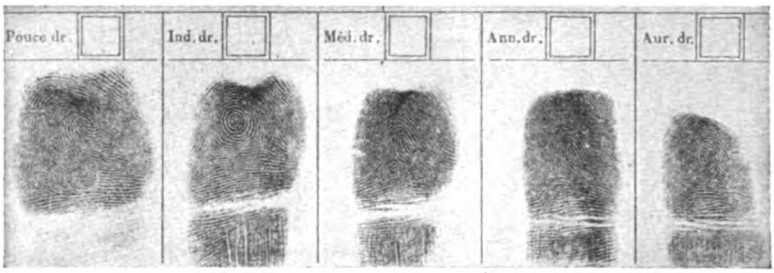
"I'm not surprised," Bertillon said. "But the man's explanation may be true. However, I have his record here. *He is Rafael Cortez*, a Mexican. His record is a bad one, but hardly a criminal one. He and Janos, who was born in Hungary, and against whom there is no recorded conviction, belonged to a secret society, some anarchist group, when they were young. They got into trouble in Marseilles many years ago and were arrested, together with an Italian named Marinetti. Cortez and Janos turned informers and got off, but Marinetti was sentenced to a short term of imprisonment and deportation. Two years later a rich demi-mondaine known as Yvonne d'Argent, was murdered in the Rue Faidher and her jewellery stolen. Marinetti had returned secretly to Paris, and the evidence against him was overwhelming. The chief witness against the Italian was this Cortez, whose friend the dead woman had been. Marinetti was sentenced to death, but the sentence was afterwards commuted to lifelong imprisonment in Cayenne. Several years later Marinetti was shot whilst trying to escape. His death is recorded on his chart and in the official dossier."



Twisting sharply round, I was in time to see an evil, malignant face peering round the open door.

FINGER-PRINTS OF THE DEAD!

FOR a moment Bertillon ceased, as though unwilling to continue, then he added, "Monsieur Dufresne brought me a report of the trial. Marinetti protested his innocence to the last and claimed that the



Police chart of Marinetti's finger-prints duplicating the bloodstained finger-prints (below) found on Kurt Janos.

woman had been murdered by Cortez and Janos, who had planned it all so that he should be guillotined. When Marinetti heard the sentence, he yelled: 'Alive or dead I'll find you both, you fiends, and Josetta will help me.' Who Josetta is I don't know. *But the finger-prints on the knife and the shirt are those of the dead convict!* No doubt is possible on that score."

I sat motionless; before me rose a vision of that gloomy chamber. I tried to visualize the tense sitters round the table, the sudden harsh voice calling, "Rafael Cortez! Rafael Cortez!"—and then the blow in the dark, which drove the knife to the heart of one of those whom Marinetti had vowed to kill.

The voice of Dufresne roused me.

"It's all nonsense, of course. Some clever trick, and perhaps this Josetta is at the bottom of it. We shall learn the truth by searching the records just prior to the murder of Yvonne d'Argent."

"But the finger-prints, man!" Bertillon exclaimed. "You can't explain them away. And they were not faked as in the Van Bromen case. I've looked for that. See, here is the chart of the convict, with the word 'deceased' across it in red. I've cabled to Cayenne for confirmation of his death, but our administration doesn't say a man is dead if he isn't."

"I don't know," said Monsieur Dufresne, doggedly. "Mistakes have occurred, although I don't suggest that it is so this time. Doesn't it strike you, however, that this dead man's finger-prints are just a bit too evident? I mean that it looks as though they had been purposely made as glaring as possible. We couldn't miss them. The man who made them knows all about our system. He knew that we should find that chart. It's no use; I'll never believe a dead man can come back and commit murder. Let me look at that snapshot Colbert found in the medium's room again, please.

"There are palms in the background," Dufresne mused, when Bertillon had handed him a small photograph. "Palms? That would be somewhere in the tropics, and Cortez is a Mexican. That tall fellow on the left in Hungarian dress might be Janos, who was born in Hungary, and the short, thick-set man Cortez. This picture was probably taken when they were young. The bull looks like the kind they breed in the Argentine. You'll enlarge it, of course. I must get in touch with the police in South America. If my guess is right, Janos and Cortez have been partners in the past before they came to France.

"Well, monsieur, to-morrow evening we will reconstruct the tragedy. The same sitters shall take their places where they sat before. The medium shall be bound in his chair. We shall all be present and try to understand what happened. Rousseau shall take the part of the murdered man."

Finger-prints found on Kurt Janos.

WE RECONSTRUCT THE TRAGEDY.

I CONFESS my heart beat quickly when we climbed the stairs of the Villa Plaisance the next evening. A cable had arrived from the Governor of Cayenne. Marinetti had been shot through the head by a guard and was buried where he fell. Cortez, *alias* Canette, refused point-blank to enter the séance room until Dufresne informed him coldly that his past was known and that unless he consented he would be arrested for the murder of Kurt Janos.

Trembling and pale as death, each person sat down again in his or her place. Rousseau,

trying his best to look unconcerned, took the chair next to Madame Lafargue. The table was wiped clean and they placed their linked hands on its surface. No detail was neglected. Bertillon locked the door and affixed seals at the top and bottom. The curtains were drawn around the cabinet, and Dufresne and I bound Rafael Cortez to his chair.

"Now," said Dufresne, placing the knife which had killed Janos in the centre of the table, "whoever killed the man who sat where Rousseau is could not possibly reach him across the table. He must have come from behind. Even then I don't see——"

And at that second every light went out!

"Sit still everybody!" Dufresne thundered. "We are here and no one can harm you. Quick! Try those switches, Colbert."

"Let no one move!" a harsh inhuman voice snarled unexpectedly. It appeared to come from a distant corner, but in the dark it was impossible to locate it with certainty. At the sound Madame Lafargue screamed: "The murderer! The murderer! That's his voice!"

"Who spoke?" Dufresne called loudly. Instantly the unknown cried:—

"Rafael Cortez! Rafael Cortez! *La muerte esta aqui!* Remember Josetta."

A horrible wailing moan sounded on the last word, followed by screams and yells of terror from all sides, and the crash of falling chairs.

"Sit still!" Dufresne shouted again, despairingly. "Why don't you use your torches, some of you?"

I had stood motionless until then, hypnotized by the horror of this tragedy in the dark, but his words brought me to my senses and I pulled a lamp from my pocket and flashed its rays round the room. Colbert was by the door fumbling helplessly at the switches. Bertillon and Dufresne loomed behind me, rigid, their faces glistening with beads of perspiration; the men and women round the table stood clasping each other or wringing their hands, the picture of abject fear. I saw that Rousseau had pulled a pistol from his pocket, but as the light flickered over the medium, still bound in his chair, he dropped it with a yell.

Cortez was drooping forward, upheld only by the rope. The knife, which a moment before had been lying on the table, had been driven into his neck with such violence that the long handle still vibrated from the force of the blow, and, crowning horror of all, the imprint of a bloodstained hand showed clearly on the bald, dome-shaped head.

"Lights!" Bertillon called fiercely, springing forward. "Is there only one torch in the room? No, don't open that door yet. Look at the seals."

Photograph of Kurt Janos and Rafael Cortez, believed to have been taken in Mexico, which proved that they had long been associated.

MURDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE POLICE.

FOR a time we were all crazed, and no wonder. That an invisible murderer should commit a crime in a room full of police was outside our experience. Little by little, however, order was restored. The terrified people were persuaded to sit quietly whilst a doctor was fetched, and Rousseau and Colbert ran downstairs to find out why the lights had failed. Meanwhile we had obtained two headlamps from a Sûreté car, and at once examined the medium. He was quite dead. The blade had pierced between two vertebræ. A superficial scrutiny of the crimson stain on his head with powerful lenses convinced us that it had been made by the same hand which had marked Janos, although we could not be

sure until we had photographed and enlarged it. The doctor now came hurrying in, but he could only confirm our diagnosis. Cortez must have died instantly. Bertillon was still examining the haft of the knife when the lamps suddenly blazed up again. A sigh of relief came from all. After inspecting their hands, Bertillon ordered Madame Lafargue and her friends to wait downstairs under Rousseau's guard. Colbert returned as they were crowding out of the room. He looked at Bertillon with a queer smile.

"Someone pulled out the main fuse," he said. "I found it lying on the ground. Furthermore, that someone must have burnt himself badly. He forgot that since the lamps were all on there would be a fierce arc. It has melted the metal clips."

"But why the fuse? Why not the main switch?"

"Because a gendarme was sitting in the kitchen near the switchboard. The fuses are in the wine-cellar. With your permission we'll just look at the servants."

This was the first step in the right direction. A man named Jules Ruick had a large, angry blister on the right index finger. He was at once taken to the depot. Our investigation continued until midnight, for the removal of a fuse by the servant definitely routed all thoughts of supernatural intervention. Bertillon laughed a little shamefacedly when Dufresne mentioned this.

"I confess I was almost convinced Marinetti had come back from beyond. It's evident that either Ruick is the murderer, or the Italian did not die in Cayenne, and Ruick is his confederate. How on earth did they do it, though?"

We had just decided to abandon our quest for that night when Colbert suddenly gave an exclamation. The wall inside the psychic cabinet was decorated with a complex design of squares and triangles, and on one of these he had found a single dark finger-print.

"That's blood," Bertillon cried, excitedly, rapping and pressing all around the stain. For a minute nothing happened—then, as he placed a thumb on the centre of the square below the smudge, the whole wall swung noiselessly inwards, revealing a narrow passage running parallel with the room. At the extreme end were steep winding stairs. Bertillon pointed to faint needle-like rays of light which pierced the wall.

"Peepholes," he said. "That's how the assassin watched and listened. Come along, but make no noise."

The stairs led us to a door which opened into the cellar where Colbert found the fuse. It was obviously the way the mysterious murderer had come and gone.

"Conceal a man in this cellar," Dufresne ordered. "We can do nothing more here. If Marinetti is still alive we must find him."

A further surprise awaited us at headquarters. The chief of the records, Monsieur Colorbier, had brought a number of photographs of men and women to Bertillon's office. They were those who had given evidence at Marinetti's trial, and one of them strangely resembled Ruick. Cleverly handled by Monsieur Dufresne, the man became entangled in so many contradictory statements that his complicity was no longer in doubt, although he strenuously denied having committed the murders.

Bloodstain which led to the discovery of the secret door, and proved that Marinetti was alive. Below: the same enlarged.

A SECRET SOCIETY'S REVENGE

DETECTIVES thereupon questioned Ruick all through the night, until, worn out at last, he confessed that he had also been a member of the secret society to which Marinetti had once belonged. Cortez, their leader, had left them all in the lurch when their revolutionary activities were discovered. As a consequence many of them were sent to prison. Thus, when two years ago Marinetti suddenly reappeared as one risen from the dead, Ruick had willingly helped him to trace Cortez. They had found him at last posing as the medium Paul Canette, and with him, acting as his confederate, was Kurt Janos. The Mexican evidently believed that he had changed beyond recognition, for

when Ruick called at the Villa Plaisance and proffered his services as assistant, Cortez had accepted. After a few months he had been shown how to enter silently through the secret door and produce trick phenomena. It had been agreed that at the first big séance, with many sitters present and Cortez bound to a chair, the Italian would enter through the cabinet and kill first Janos and then the Mexican. After the room had been locked by the police, Marinetti had returned and left his bloodstained finger-prints on the dead man's linen.

Marinetti photographed before he was sent to Cayenne.

Ruick's confession helped us considerably in spreading our nets for Marinetti. A week later he was captured, disguised as an old woman, just as he boarded a ship bound for Callao.

His story as he related it to the *juge d'instruction* was fiercely tragic and pathetic. I obtained a copy of the *greffier's* shorthand notes, so that I can outline it briefly.

"If ever there was a devil in human shape, monsieur," he began, "it was that Mexican dog, Rafael Cortez, a cruel, lustful, and cunning devil. I met him for the first time when I was a rider on a ranch near Colpaz. My parents had emigrated from Palermo to South America when I was a boy. That meeting blighted my life. He was the leader of a secret revolutionary society and urged me to join. My Sicilian blood tempted me and I swore the fearful oath which bound all the members. Then I fell in love with Josetta Perez, the sweetest soul on this earth. Her people were wealthy and proud of their pure Castilian descent and I was only a poor gaucho, but she loved me passionately, and we decided to run away. Cortez followed us and threatened to set his men on me for deserting the cause of anarchy. I didn't know then that he coveted my wife. She was terrified of Cortez and begged me to leave the country, so we fled to Marseilles and for a time we were happy. I had obtained a good position with a company dealing in South American produce, for I spoke Spanish fluently. But Cortez had spies in France, and one day, when I came home, I found him waiting for me. There was no shaking him off, although I refused to return to Mexico. With the help of his partner, Kurt Janos, he succeeded in involving me in a stabbing affray, and although I merely acted in self-defence the French Courts sentenced me to a year's imprisonment and deported me to Italy.

Josetta Marinetti, from a photograph found in her husband's possession.

"As soon as I was free I travelled to Paris, where Josetta was living under an assumed name. Her family had sent her some money, and with the little she had saved we started life afresh. My Josetta sat as model at an art school, for she was very beautiful. I worked in a shipping office. We both hoped that by now the Mexican had forgotten us.

LED INTO A TRAP.

"ONE evening, whilst we were dining in a restaurant on the Boulevards, we perceived him sitting at a table not far away, and with him was a woman. It was the poor creature whom he afterwards murdered. He nodded to us in amiable fashion and came to our table for a cup of coffee. I thought it best to be

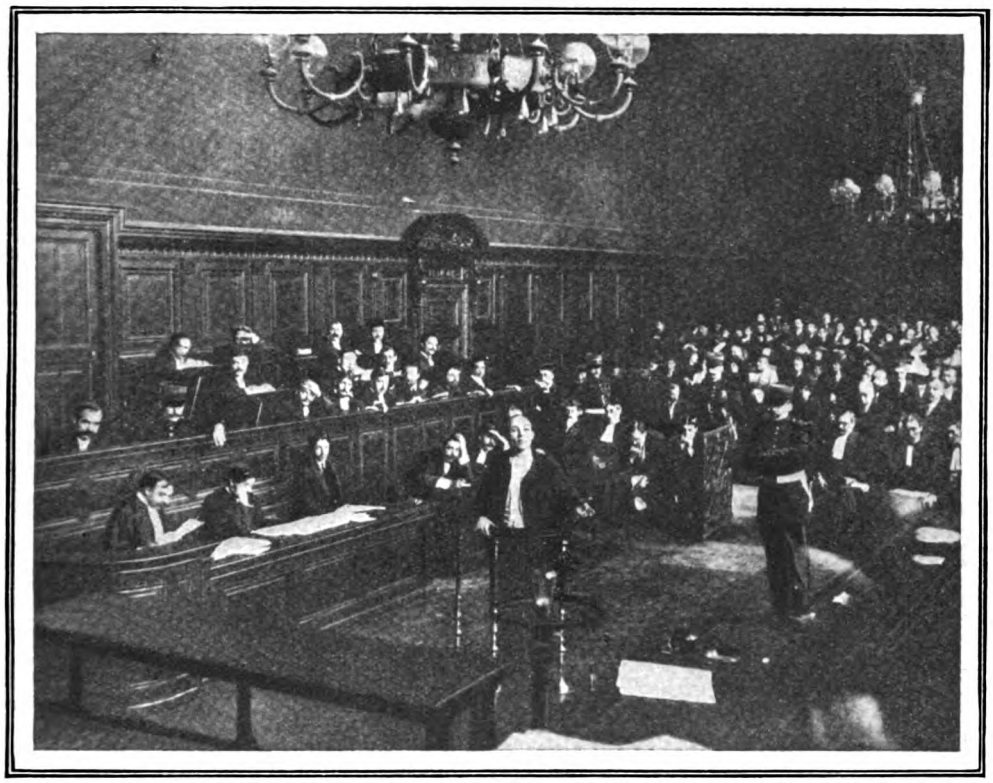
civil for Josetta's sake, and so for a time we became friendly again. I had seen no sign of Janos and did not guess that he was constantly shadowing me. It was shortly after this meeting that I began to notice a change in my wife. Her face was pale and drawn, and often when I returned from my work I would see the trace of tears on her cheeks. At last I demanded to know what was on her mind, and she confessed that during my absence Cortez constantly persecuted her with his attentions. At that I flew into a rage. Instead of going to my office the next day I watched the house from a near-by *café*. When I saw the Mexican dog enter I followed and caught him on the stairs. He struggled desperately, but I was strong then, and thrashed him thoroughly. A week later all Paris was discussing the assassination of Yvonne d'Argent.

"I was accused of the murder! Her jewellery was found in my room, and the handkerchief which strangled her was identified by the laundry mark as belonging to me. I could not prove where I had been the evening the crime was committed, for I had been watching my own house; the Mexican had stopped Josetta in the street the day before, and told her he would come when I was out and kidnap her. My previous conviction went against me, as did the fight on the stairs. The woman had been a friend of Cortez, and he and Janos stated on oath that they had noticed me near the house. Even the concierge identified me as the man who had passed her window. I was, as you know, sentenced to death. But I swear, monsieur, that I am innocent of that crime. It was a plot engineered by that devil. Josetta fled to her people in Mexico, and a year later I received a letter in Cayenne in which she told me that she intended to live in Pernambuco. I realized that the brave girl meant to help me to escape. I must not tell you how it was done, but after that we corresponded regularly. Life was a hell, but there was hope! Only two things mattered: my wife and vengeance. Alive or dead, I had sworn to kill Cortez and his partner, and I meant to keep that oath. I have kept it.

AN ESCAPE FROM CAYENNE!

"AT last, after I had spent three years felling trees and making roads in the penal settlement, I received the welcome news that an Indian pirogue would be hidden in the creek called the Devil's Pool, and that two Indians would be camped there for a month waiting for me. My chance came two weeks later. Josetta had paid a large sum to a Chinese in the convict town, who promised to have clothes and food ready for me. And one night I and three comrades set out for the Devil's Pool. That march through the poisonous jungle was a nightmare. Our food soon gave out and we were weak and ill. Then, to crown it all, guards caught sight of us as we camped not a day's march from the spot where the Indians waited, and shot one of my companions. I changed clothes with him and stuffed letters and papers into his pockets. I knew that by the time he was found the ants would have done their work and the guards would believe that I had been killed and officially report my death.

"So we reached a tiny town on the coast, where Josetta waited. Oh, monsieur, it was worth it all, but the gods have never been kind to me. The hardships Josetta had endured and the shock of my terrible sentence had undermined her strength. She died a month after reaching Pernambuco. For a time grief crazed me, although no doubt it also saved me, for I was well hidden in the asylum. When at last sanity returned I was as you see me now, an old, embittered man, though not thirty-five. But the thought of revenge made me strong and cunning. I had the money my sweet wife had brought me, and I earned more. Years passed before I finally traced Cortez to Paris. He had become the medium Paul Canette, and he rarely went out. I should never have found him if I had not seen Janos enter the Villa Plaisance one day. Ruick thereupon obtained a post in the house and showed me the secret passage. Then, when I learned that a lady had arranged for several sittings, I realized that the longed-for moment had arrived. You know what happened. I had at first intended to kill both the same evening, but then I reflected that if I killed Janos first, Cortez, who believed me to be dead, would suffer all the tortures of a man condemned to die, and waiting in agony for the inevitable. That is why I spoke to him in Spanish and told him that death was near ('*La muerte esta aqui*'). I also left my mark on Janos so that Cortez should believe I had returned from the grave. Men of his stamp are so superstitious that I fully expected him to become crazed with terror. I had no fear for myself, since, officially, I was buried in Cayenne. I intended to wait some time before killing the beast, but I learned that Madame Lafargue had given the police the name 'Rafael Cortez' correctly. I realized that with this clue the Sûreté would soon arrive at the truth. So I had to act quickly. The presence of the detectives didn't bother me. I felt sure that after the second uncanny death they would believe that they had been brought about by supernatural means, and so they would have done if that fool Ruick



Marinetti telling his tragic story at the Paris Assizes. He was allowed to stand where all could see him.
This photograph is a unique picture of a French trial.

hadn't burnt his finger and dropped the fuse."

Six months later Marinetti and his two accomplices were brought up before the Paris Assizes.

WAS ALL REALLY EXPLAINED?

THE trial caused a sensation and the public enclosure was crowded. Marinetti insisted on relating his Odyssey again in Court, and so impressed the judges and jury that he escaped with a sentence of ten years. His counsel also sent a petition to the President of the Republic, Monsieur Fallières, pleading for a revision of the former trial, but before any decision could be taken Marinetti became insane. He died in an asylum at Charenton. Ruick was sentenced to five years. He made a strange statement just before the jury retired. Always when helping Cortez with his deceptions he had felt that unseen presences were around him in the dark, and several times mysterious voices had murmured in his ear, "You are making a mockery of sacred things. You will all be punished for it, and punishment is not far away."

When we returned to headquarters after the trial Monsieur Bertillon handed me the Mexican knife which had killed the two scoundrels Cortez and Janos.

"Put this in the museum," he said. "If ever I am again tempted to believe in the supernatural I shall go and look at it. Marinetti was quite right. If Ruick had not burnt his finger and dropped the fuse, we might never have solved the mystery."

"I am not sure after all that there was not '*something beyond our guess*' which helped Marinetti," Dufresne said, thoughtfully. "If that man was not guided by unseen powers to what I believe was a just vengeance, then there is no truth in any religion, and I am, as you know, a religious man."

The report of the trial can be found in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, Paris edition, March, 1910, under the heading "Procès Marinetti, déjà condamné à mort et échappé du bagne."

(*Next month: "The Happy Death."*)

The Understudy

By

G. R. MALLOCH

Illustrated by
H. COLLER

NO one had ever thrown any mud at the family name, a name famous in the theatre for generations, in a calling where much mud was thrown by the baser sort. It was Sir Richard's delight to recall that fact when malicious gossip smirched this or that reputation in the theatrical world. He had always set his face resolutely against that sort of meanness; he would speak a dignified word or two of protest when some evil rumour was retailed in his hearing; but that was not often, because people knew that the theatre was Sir Richard's religion, almost, and to preserve its good name his constant endeavour. Men, he would say, go to school in their youth and to the play in their maturity for the same purpose, to educate themselves—the province of the schoolmaster was to train the minds and bodies of youth, of the actor to educate the senses and the soul to the manifold possibilities of human life. It was an old-fashioned ideal that he sought to maintain in these days, he would admit; but he adhered to it in good times and bad, in prosperity and the reverse. In the plays he produced, whether by the old masters or the new, this standard was adhered to, often to his financial detriment; but even the adherents of cocktail comedy, who considered him out-of-date and pedantic, respected him.

Sitting at the head of his table in the panelled dining-room, the erect figure, the finely-cut features, the dark hair greying at the temples, the well-cut clothes carelessly worn, the general air of distinction, all combined to make an arresting picture. Even at summer noon the room was dimly lit; the glare of the street outside was mellowed into a golden light as it filtered through the latticed panes. He liked a dark room; it was a restful contrast to the glare of the stage, and he sometimes told himself with a laugh that it softened the little lines that Time was writing on his face. Just at present he was watching with appreciative eyes a solitary ray of sunlight that poured from an open casement and struck across the darker interior, a streak of pale gold; he followed it to where it rested like a little spot-light on the head of his wife, making a halo of her blonde hair. Suddenly she leaned out of it, to emphasize something she was saying to the man who sat opposite her. How beautiful she was! His eyes followed hers to the face of his guest and rested on it; a smile moved the corners of his mouth.

It was an old joke now, but one that never ceased to amuse him faintly. There sat a man who was almost the living replica of himself twenty years ago, a man of the same height and build; with the same lean, sensitive face, the same thatch of dark hair; in the kind light of that room they might pass for brothers. But only in that light, he reflected with an inward sigh, and only in silence, for the other spoke and moved and gesticulated with a fire that was no longer his. And he might have added, only in that subdued light, for in broad day there was just a touch of furtiveness about Chippendale's expression in unguarded moments. A good fellow, Chippendale, he mused; and what a stroke of luck it had been finding him! He recalled how he had wanted someone to duplicate him in a new play in which he had to come face to face with a man posing as himself, and how he had searched high and low and had been on the point of abandoning the search when this fellow had suddenly emerged from some obscure corner; not only a likeness, but an actor trained in the good school of repertory, who had played the part well and remained a member of his company ever since. Not

that he acted much for the Stadium; he was Sir Richard's understudy, but he was the perfect understudy. His real employment was that of Sir Richard's private secretary, and that was how he earned the generous salary that enabled him to dress so well, belong to a good golf club, and run a small second-hand car. A useful fellow and a gentleman, mused Sir Richard; a decent friend for Sheila, too, always handy to run messages for her, drive her car, or do any of the little things a woman wanted done, which he hadn't time to do for her himself.

Sheila! How beautiful she was; too young for him, people had said, he knew—but he'd shown them that they were wrong. She loved him; he knew that; that explained everything, miraculous as it was. She was the greatest success of his career. He had married out of the theatre, against the family tradition, it was true; but what a success that marriage had been!

SUDDENLY he realized that he had fallen again into a growing habit of withdrawing from his company and playing the part of spectator at the little plays of daily life. A sort of busman's holiday, he reflected; it was so interesting just to watch these two, like a pair of perfect actors in a perfect comedy—gestures, looks, movements, laughter, more natural and graceful than the most perfect art could have made them. Still, it was ill-mannered to sit in silence at luncheon, and he must check this musing habit of his. What, by the way, are they talking about?

Nothing very important: golf, the state of the roads—Mid-Surrey—Sandwich—Ranelagh—Wimbledon; the sort of talk that might pass between any two active young people in an idle mood at luncheon. Chippendale was a golfer whose game was respected even by the professionals; lucky, thought Sir Richard, who was an indifferent player and seldom found time for a round; lucky when Sheila's so keen on golf—one didn't want to be a drag on her or keep her from her golf and motoring. Nearly twenty years younger, one must remember that always.

Sheila interrupted these musings by pushing back her chair and rising. She turned to Sir Richard.

"You'll forgive me if I rush off, Dick? I'm full of engagements this afternoon."

"So am I, I'm afraid," said her husband, ruefully. "And I've got to make a speech at Lady Marston's reception in aid of—of what is it in aid of, Chippendale?" he concluded, turning to the younger man, who was on his feet, ready to open the door for his employer's wife.

"The Home for Feeble Released Prisoners," said Chippendale, with a smile. "The speech is on your desk, Sir Richard—I've made it as brief and snappy as possible."

"Thank you," said Sir Richard. "I shall feel exactly like a Feeble Released Prisoner when her ladyship has done with me."

"Poor Dick," said his wife, patting his shoulder. "It's too bad."

"Well, I must trot, sir, too," said Chippendale. "There's nothing you want me to attend to at the theatre beyond the usual round, I suppose?"

"No, thank you," said Sir Richard, and Chippendale, after a momentary hesitation, made for the door.

"I'll telephone you some time from the theatre, Lady Strand, about that," he said and was gone.

Sir Richard had detained his wife's hand.

"What's he going to telephone about?" he asked, idly. Sheila did not answer for a moment; the hand was withdrawn.

"Oh, about the car for to-night," she said, absently. "Good-bye, Dick—take care of yourself. Don't get up—you're looking tired."

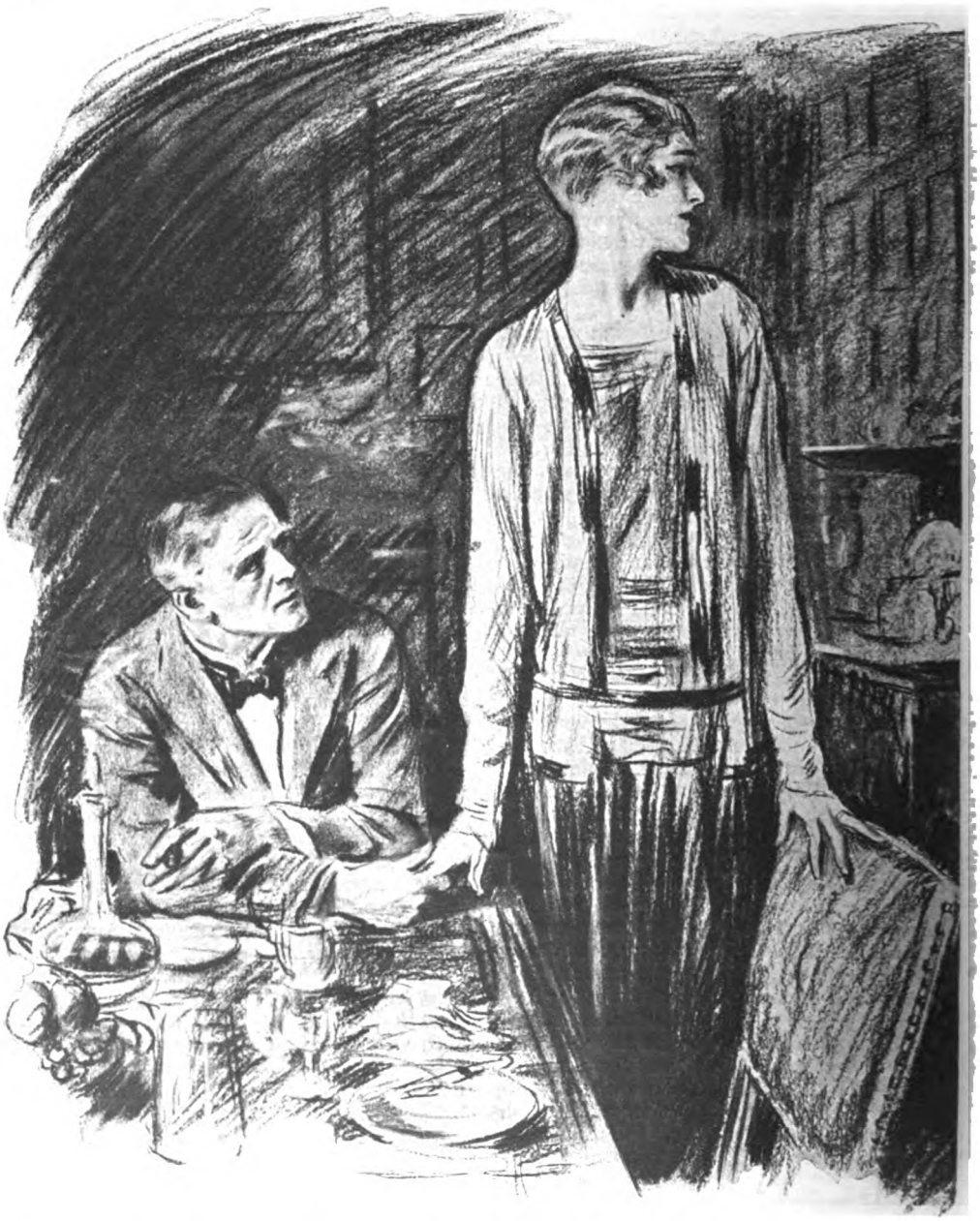
He looked after her affectionately as she went out. Yes, he was tired. He poured himself another glass of port; yes, he was tired—and she was full of life, rushing off to golf or God knew what. Like Chippendale—never seemed to get fagged—always on the go. How old was he himself? He saw two figures and shut his mind's eye on them, refusing to acknowledge them. A man was as old as he felt; confound it, how old did he feel now, sitting here alone?

Phillips, the devoted old butler, hovered in and out of the room several times, unwilling to disturb his master sitting there so deep in thought, before Sir Richard rose from the table. The old man opened the door for his master and looked after him with an expression of concern: Sir Richard was overdoing it—a man of his age. Sir Richard made his way across the hall to his study.

Someone was speaking in the telephone cabinet in the hall. Sheila—so she hadn't gone yet. And she hadn't shut the door either.

"Brighton?" he heard. "Object to it? Oh, no, but it's a little obvious, isn't it? Very well. No, I feel quite calm at present. Yes—yes—yes. The Herringbone Inn. Is it all right? Oh, I'll trust your word. To-morrow at five. I'm stopping at Milly's——"

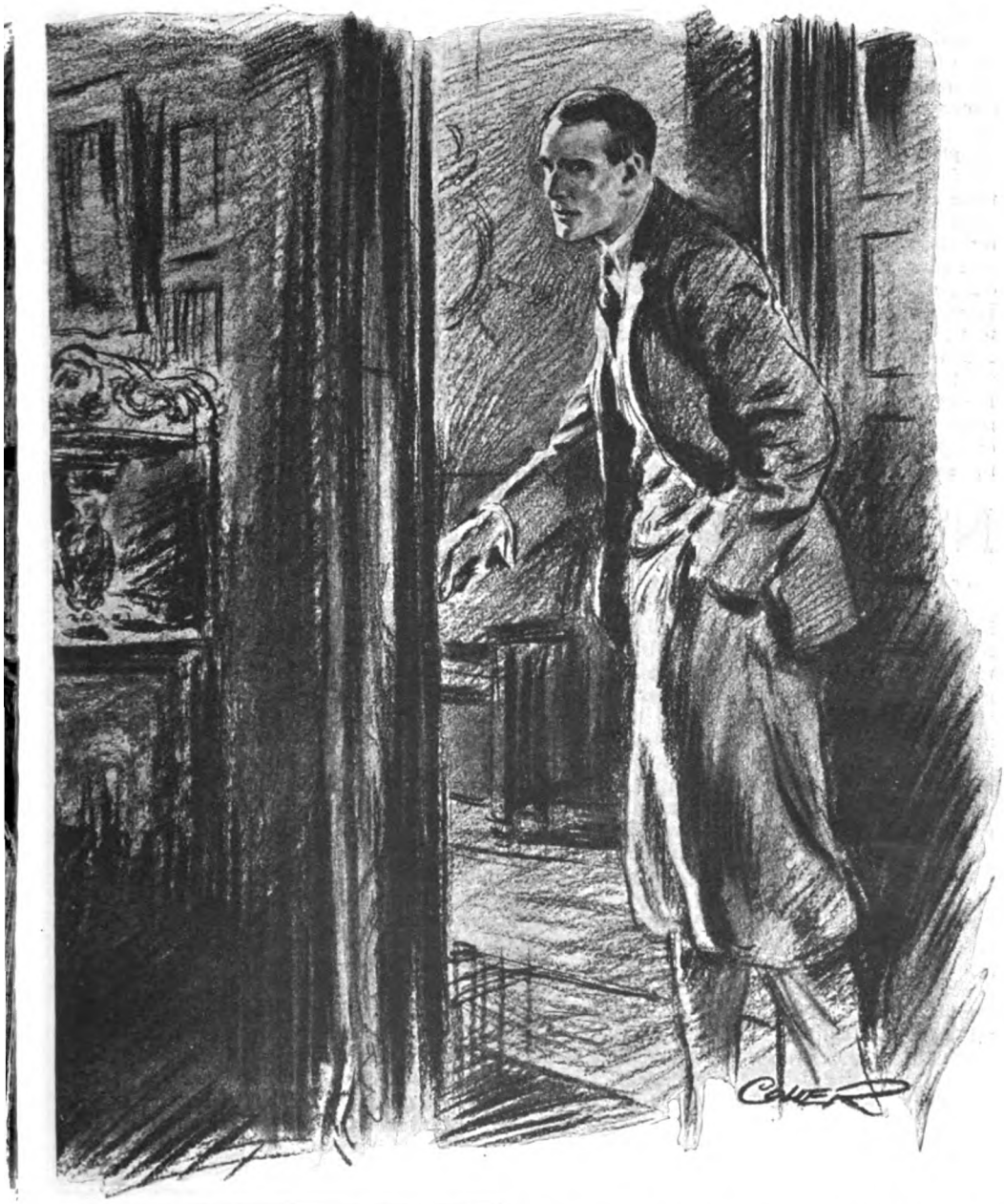
That was what he heard as he passed through the hall, leaving the voice still going on: some excursion of Sheila's she was arranging with a friend. The way



they rushed up and down to Brighton and thought nothing of it! Liked to take things in a more leisurely fashion himself. If one were going to Brighton by road, why not take it at a pace that allowed you to see the country—perhaps stop at any bit you fancied? Well, they were younger, of course—and here was that speech Chippendale had written for him. Invaluable chap!

SIR RICHARD came home from the theatre that night earlier than was his custom. He had a very exacting part in the piece he was presenting, he had had a busy day, and for once he had to confess to himself that he was tired out. He was glad to find himself in his own hall, and glad to be helped out of his coat so sympathetically by Phillips.

"Is your mistress at home?" he asked.



"I'll telephone you some time from the theatre, Lady Strand, about that," Chippendale said, and was gone.

Phillips replied that her ladyship had not come in yet, and a glance at the clock told Sir Richard that there was nothing unusual about that, for it was barely half-past eleven. The butler accompanied him to the library, stirred the fire, knowing that Sir Richard liked a fire even on summer nights, waited till his master had sat down, and then moved a small table with the decanters and siphons near to him.

"Thank you, Phillips, that will do. I shall not require anything more, and you may go to bed. Good night."

"Good night, Sir Richard." The old man

went out quietly. His master sighed and helped himself to a drink. He would wait up for a little in case Sheila came home early—she had her own key, of course, and it wasn't likely, but he would like to see her. And there was plenty of work for him to do: he glanced at the table laden with piles of manuscripts—plays to be read, some time or another, most of them impossible, even although they had already been sifted by his reader. Fifty plays there, perhaps, and how many did he produce in a year? One, if he were lucky; two at the outside. It was absurd—and yet one must be fair to the poor devils who wrote them; maybe the undiscovered genius was represented in that unappetizing heap of typescript. He got up and crossed to his desk. On the middle of the blotting-pad lay a large orange-coloured envelope addressed to him in Sheila's bold handwriting.

NOW, why should that pull him up with a jerk, he wondered? Some change of her plans—perhaps she was staying overnight with friends—perhaps she had some stupid little bill to confess about—perhaps she wanted him to go on and join her somewhere. He picked up the letter and returned to his chair by the fire; it lay in his hand unopened for some moments. Funny that thought about Sheila that had come into his head at the theatre to-night—his part was that of an elderly man who loved passionately a beautiful girl, and, at first winning her, saw her gradually slipping from his reach among a crowd of young people who drew her back to themselves And while he was on the stage in the midst of his great scene, there had suddenly flashed upon him the question, What if it were true—what if it were Sheila who was gradually being drawn away from him? A strange fancy! He dismissed it, but he remembered it now. Sheila, much younger, all her friends were much younger—— Oh, nonsense, he was tired out and needed a rest. They must go away together for a holiday. It wasn't fair to her to let himself get run down.

He opened the envelope, began to read the letter it contained, and in a moment his whole world had crashed in ruins round him. He sat there stunned for a time, and then his mind began to grope feebly about for the realities of the situation.

Sheila had left him. Sheila had left him for Chippendale—for Chippendale! She did not ask or expect to be forgiven—the wrong she was doing him was too great, she wrote; but would he think as kindly of her as he could, if he ever could? She had not wanted to hurt him, she hoped that perhaps she was not hurting him so very much, he had so much to occupy his mind besides her! Ah! had he neglected her, then? Maybe, though God knew unintentionally. So much to occupy his mind—yes, but who else to occupy his heart?

Chippendale? Young, strong, handsome, very attractive to women, probably. Yes, he was old beside them. Chippendale, the fellow he had made, dragged out from his rut and set in a circle he could never have reached, the fellow he had treated like a son or a brother, trusting him in everything as he had trusted him with his wife. And yet, could he blame him if Sheila loved him—Sheila the irresistible, Sheila of his own age—youth calling to youth—cruel, cruel to the old, but natural.

He tried to make his mind work clearly. What ought he to do? Only one consideration presented itself: to do what was best for Sheila. He loved her more than anything in the world, and her happiness was more than his own. Was this the best thing for her? Had she acted on some impulse or had she thought it all out and realized the consequences? Probably not—that would be very unlike the generous, impulsive Sheila he knew. For it meant ruin for her, social ruin, complete and disastrous. The people he knew, his friends and his father's friends, were not of the come-easy, go-easy type; they were of society, but not of the smart cocktail-and-divorce Bohemian group. He and she were welcomed in some of the best houses in England; Sheila had been presented at Court on her marriage by a very proud Duchess; his title had been given because he was thought a man who would never disgrace it. And now this—Sheila asking to be divorced—his wife running away with his paid servant. There was disgrace enough here and to spare. No such thing had ever happened in his family.

And yet he was to blame, surely, and not Sheila. He had neglected her, perhaps, feeling too secure in her love, had let her drift into this affair with his eyes shut. Could he still save her from herself? Bitter as the scandal would be to him, yet if he could believe if for her real happiness he would not interfere. Chippendale—was he worthy of Sheila? Young, handsome, certainly: but were there not some things, little things? Was he the real stuff or not quite? Not quite reliable—those debts he had paid—that queer mistake in the theatre accounts which Chippendale had explained so copiously and for which he had taken his word, not choosing to dig into the thing: the night he had seen Chippendale very drunk, grossly drunk: all small things, perhaps, things one was willing to overlook in Chippendale. But Sheila's future husband—was one willing to overlook them in

a man who asserted himself as worthy of Sheila?

For all her boasted knowledge of the world, how little she really knew! Generous, chivalrous, taking people at their own valuations—there was a lot she didn't know. And she didn't know how he had shielded her from that knowledge. Foolish and old-fashioned he had been: if she had known more, she would have seen Chippendale as he really was, perhaps: again he was to blame. He must save her, must give her a chance. She hadn't realized the consequences to herself or to him; if she could be saved, she must be. But could it be done? His mind worked rapidly now—there was just a chance.

HE took up the telephone and asked for the Editor of *The Morning Mercury*. Blane was an old friend, and he knew that he would stretch a point for him.

"You want me to say that you and Lady Strand have left for the country for a few days? Indeed!" Blane's voice sounded faintly satirical. "Why all this urgency, may I ask? Of course, it's epoch-making intelligence. Shall I splash it across the news page or put it in the Stop-Press column, eh?"

"Don't be a fool, Blane," said Sir Richard. "I know I'm asking a lot to have a damn-fool paragraph like that pushed in at this hour of the night. But I'm deadly serious—you'd oblige me more than you can guess. Just that we've gone away—oh, doctor's orders or anything you like—and that my place at the Stadium will be taken by my understudy, Mr. Chippendale. You can—you will? I'm eternally obliged, my dear fellow."

"Well, short of a strike in the printing office, which is quite possible, the great news will be served up at London's breakfast table to-morrow. Oh, all right, I'm busy. Good night."

Sir Richard hung up the receiver with a sigh of relief. That was the first step—now for the second. It was a quarter to twelve—just possible that he might catch his manager still at the theatre: not likely, but a chance. He gave the theatre number and the chance came off. Mr. Sharrock was still there and very cross at being delayed. His tone changed when he recognized his employer's voice, and was sincerely regretful when he heard that Sir Richard's doctor had ordered a few days' rest imperatively. Mr. Chippendale would take his part to-morrow? Yes, he quite understood. Slips to be printed and inserted in the programmes—good, he would see to that. Get it into the first editions of the evening papers—easy. In *The Morning Mercury* already—fine. Sir Richard could rely on him to see to every detail. Oh—and send Bowes, his dresser, round to the house first thing to-morrow—yes. He hoped it was nothing serious. Poor Sharrock sounded really anxious about him, thought Sir Richard, as he rang off.

And now what else? To write to Sheila—where? The Herringbone Hotel, of course; that was the place she had mentioned—that was the only chance. "To-morrow at five," he had heard her say on the telephone. Where was she to-night—at some friend's house? Would it be too late—probably, but he couldn't help that, he must try to save her, late or not late. He sat down at his desk and began to write.

It was not a very long letter, but it took a long time to write. He tried to set before her as clearly as possible what the consequences of her action must be to her. He asked her whether she was so absolutely sure about Chippendale that she was willing to sacrifice her future and her whole social career on the certainty of his being all that he seemed to be. He said little of himself—only that if he had appeared neglectful, the neglect had been apparent but not real. He loved her and he would always love her, whatever happened, but he thought that she ought perhaps to weigh the thing a little more closely. And then he told her what he had done—that her visit to Brighton with her husband would be announced in next morning's papers, so that there could be no scandal if she came back. And anyone seeing her with Chippendale might very well mistake him for Sir Richard, so close was the well-known resemblance. At least, in the face of the newspaper announcement, no one would in a week or so be able to take oath that it wasn't. Finally, to make the thing more sure, he had announced that Chippendale was to take his place at the next performance. How was that to be managed? Easily—he was going to play a double part—act Chippendale, as well as the character Chippendale was announced to take. If she thought well of it, would she come back? If she were perfectly and unmistakably assured that she did not want to—well, no harm was done. Would she decide and forgive him for making such a fuss?

He slipped out and posted the letter himself; the box had long been cleared, but at least it should reach her some time in the evening, before—his mind stumbled on the thought—before it was too late. He knew that where Sheila was concerned there would be a too late; she had her codes.

TO Bowes, his dresser, next morning: "Bowes, we are old friends, are we not?"

"Honoured to hear you say it, Sir Richard, I'm sure."

"Well, here is how you can prove it. You've heard that Mr. Chippendale is taking my place to-night. He isn't. I am going to act Mr. Chippendale as well as my own part. A bet, Bowes, a bet that I shall appear on my own stage without anyone recognizing me. But you must bind yourself to absolute secrecy."

Bowes was highly delighted. He entered into details, touches that would make the deception perfect.

"First thing, Sir Richard, you must be Mr. Chippendale from the moment you leave your own doorstep. Waisty tweed overcoat. Soft felt with a turned-down brim, yellow gloves, a brown suit, maybe. I'll get you the outfit that'll make you the spit of him, even if the two of you weren't so much alike as it is. You can manage his voice, Sir Richard?"

"Oh, easily."

"Then all we have to do is to keep people out of the dressing-room. You'll have to use his, of course. We'll win this bet, Sir Richard, you leave it to me."

Bowes went on his way rejoicing, and Sir Richard shut himself up in his library, going over his part in Chippendale's voice. He knew every tone of it, and all that he had to do was to remember that he was Chippendale. But to pass as Chippendale the man and not the voice would not be so easy. He tried to put himself in Chippendale's skin—a young adventurer, slack in many ways, probably really in love with Sheila and at the same time thinking of the advantages Sheila might bring him. If he could get down to the real character he knew that he could find the bearing, the gait, the play of eyes that went with it.

There was no *matinée*, fortunately, and he left the house that evening, after the attentions of Bowes, Chippendale to the life. A skilful touch or two had brought his face back to the other's age, the grey had disappeared from his hair, he had the gait of youth, and a fortunately wet evening made it excusable to wear a long coat. In the taxi, the brim of his hat well down, he was very much like Chippendale; but when he alighted at the stage door he had a moment of trepidation. He resolved to test the disguise: pausing at the door-keeper's box, he asked for his letters in Chippendale's voice.

"Nothing for you to-night, Mr. Chippendale," was the reply. "Taking Sir Richard's place, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Sir Richard, vastly relieved. "And don't let anyone in to see me to-night—it's a terrible strain going on like this with no notice."

Inside he met Mr. Sharrock in the passage. Fortunately it was not too light just there. He brushed past Sharrock, who obviously wanted to talk.

"For God's sake, Sharrock, don't bother me about anything to-night, and keep people away from my room. I'm all wrought up. I'll make a mess of it if I'm bothered by anyone."

Sharrock looked after him and nodded. Didn't like that fellow overmuch, but he must have his chance. He gave orders that Chippendale was to be left to himself.

In Chippendale's room, Sir Richard submitted himself to the ministrations of Bowes.

SHEILA was the first to arrive at the hotel. She had driven herself over to Brighton from a friend's house where she had spent the night, a night without sleep. Sheila was finding out that it is easy to work oneself up to deciding on a course of action, but when it comes to carrying out such plans in entirely new surroundings and a hard, practical atmosphere, they assume quite a different aspect. Let us not blame Sheila too much: Chippendale was an accomplished lover on and off the stage, and he had set himself deliberately to get her. He had made himself her constant attendant, and in a hundred subtle ways had suggested to her that her husband was an old man while she was a young, radiant woman. He had twisted Sir Richard's absorption in affairs to deliberate neglect; he had shown her to herself as the neglected heroine. Skilfully, cautiously, he had made his advances, till, at a carefully chosen moment, he had with broken voice and averted face blurted out his adoration and love of her. He was young, he was magnetic, he was constantly with her: she had come to believe in him, in his love, in her wrongs. She was flattered more than moved. She drifted, she began to believe Chippendale when he told her that she loved him, she came to see her husband as a man who did not need her, a man absorbed in his own success—in Chippendale's cleverly drawn portrait of him. She was sorry for Chippendale; he did need her; she deceived herself into thinking that she needed him.

But as she got out of her car and entered the hotel, all this confident picture of things as they were not had got blurred and she was not quite so sure. As she had driven through the country by herself, odd glimpses of Sir Richard as she had seen him before Chippendale had set up his distorting glass

Sheila took the letter from him and rose. "There will be no divorce," she said.

kept intruding themselves on her mind. And now, as she found herself in the lounge and was told in answer to her inquiry that no Mr. Chippendale had yet arrived, she felt shaken all through. She was turning away to find a seat, when the clerk's voice detained her.

"A letter has just arrived for Lady Strand—we have no one of that name here. I suppose it is not for you, madam, by any chance?"

Yes, it was for her, Sheila admitted, and took it to a quiet corner of the lounge. She had recognized her husband's writing. So he knew where she was! She was almost afraid to open it, knowing that it must reveal the extent of his wound.

As she read his calmly worded, anxiously unselfish letter, full of concern for her and yet crying out between the lines with his own hurt, a dim realization came to her of what she had done: broken his heart and brought scandal and what to him was disgrace into his life. But his attitude was so fine and unselfish—she began to see Chippendale in a different light, in a blinding white light that brought out every line and blemish of his character and conduct. Had he really loved her? Was she just a contemptible fool, unworthy of Richard, not knowing her own mind, swayed by vanity, bought by flattery?

Chippendale stood before her, flushed, handsome, apologetic about some delay. He made to take both her hands in his, but she stopped him with a gesture and handed him the letter. He sat down beside her. The letter annoyed him; he sensed some change in Sheila. He resolved to be diplomatic.

"It's a wonderful letter, and of course the old boy's worried about you, Sheila. But you're not yourself, are you? I mean what he says here about your future. I can look after that. Of course, I've lost my job and all that, but it'll be quite easy to get another one now."

"Now?" queried Sheila.

"Well, yes," was the reply which undid Chippendale finally. "You see, all this affair'll be a bit of an advertisement, in a way—the divorce and all that."

"You mean," said Sheila, in a voice he did not recognize, "that you'll be a celebrity because you ran off with Sir Richard Strand's wife?"

"Oh, hang it, I didn't put it just like that; I didn't mean that exactly."

Sheila took the letter from him and rose. "There will be no divorce," she said. "Good-bye."

And before he could stop her she was out of the place. When, after a moment of hesitation, he reached the door, her car was moving away, carrying with it all Mr. Chippendale's visions of bliss and celebrity. He watched it out of sight and walked moodily to the bar.

SHEILA drove to London and the Stadium Theatre. All the way in her mind the uppermost thought was to get to Richard and somehow ease his agony of mind. It seemed vastly pathetic to her that he should for her sake, for the sake of her honour and reputation, be taking upon his shoulders that night the burden of youth, youth, the thing that had come near to breaking his heart. For his heart should not be broken, that she was determined on now. And on the stage to-night he was playing the part of a young man who had robbed him of happiness, when he himself must now, if ever, be feeling the burden of his years. A thousand instances of his love for her rose before her as the racing miles went by. She saw herself as a foolish, selfish child beside his gentle, kindly wisdom. It hurt, but it hurt to heal.

She reached the theatre as the curtain went up for the last act. Mr. Sharrock, who happened to be in front for a moment, saw her with astonishment. He came forward.

"Why, Lady Strand," he exclaimed, "I thought you and Sir Richard had gone out of town. Sir Richard's all right, I hope?"

"Oh, yes. I thought I'd just like to see Mr. Chippendale in this."

Sharrock looked at her costume—evidently just come up from the country. There had been some gossip about her and Chippendale. He began to put two and two together.

"He's immense, Lady Strand, immense! They're simply eating out of his hand. Barring Sir Richard himself, I've never seen a better performance in this theatre, or any other for that matter. You want to go in—I don't believe there's a seat in the house."

"That doesn't matter," she assured him. "I'll run up to the back of the circle. Don't bother about me."

Sharrock gazed after her for a moment, shrugged his shoulders, and went about his business. No doubt Chippendale was a genius—he'd misjudged the fellow. As for anything else—well, life was life and it was no affair of his, anyhow.

Sheila had come to see Richard and to tell him that she regretted her folly. She didn't mean to ask to be forgiven and taken back, but if he wanted her she would go. He could not possibly want her after what she had done; of that she was assured. His ideal of her, if he had still cherished one, must have been shattered; and his whole system of life and thought would reject her as a light woman alien to his world. But

still she must see him and make her apology, her submission ; she knew now that he had been right in his doubts of Chippendale, and above all he must know that this effort he was making to save her good name had not been wasted. As soon as the curtain fell she would go to him—meantime, she must wait somewhere and away from the curious eyes of his staff. In the dark at the back of the circle she leaned on the rail and looked down to the stage.

Her first thought was of what a marvellous actor he was. This was Chippendale, the voice, the accent, the pose ; Chippendale, the echo of Sir Richard, to the life. And yet there was something more—it was like a re-created Chippendale, a Chippendale full of real fire and genuine passion, a real man, not a copy of one. He had reached the great scene of the play in which the elderly hero stood watching his young mistress go off in the midst of a laughing group of her contemporaries, and in which the dramatist, defying all convention, had given him a speech that was naked soliloquy, a thing that no actor but Sir Richard could have brought off successfully.

And now he stood alone and poured it forth, all the worship in his heart, all the longing, all the grief, the torture of loss that was worse than death because death takes the beloved out of life, and this did not. As he spoke the voice and the accent of Chippendale fell from him and it was her husband who, down there gazing upwards so that he might have been addressing the words to her, told in broken, agonizing words his passion and his sorrow. People who heard him said that at this point Chippendale was so carried away that he almost actually became Sir Richard Strand.

The curtain came down on one of those electric silences that tell of a deeply moved audience. Then the applause burst out in thunders ; Chippendale's name was made, Chippendale was the rising star, Sir Richard the declining one to the applauding people. Sheila glimpsed that too, as one result of the effort Sir Richard had made for her.

She made her way hurriedly to the back. Bowes stood at the door of Mr. Chippendale's dressing-room awaiting Sir Richard. He stepped forward to bar her entrance, then, seeing who it was, admitted her.

"I suppose you're in the secret, your ladyship ?" he said. "Sir Richard's won his bet—he's done magnificent. But what gets me is that Mr. Chippendale's getting the credit."

"You might leave us, Bowes, till I ring," interrupted Sir Richard. He had seen Sheila, pale and shrinking against the dressing table.

The door shut upon Bowes.

"GLAD you've come back, Sheila," said Sir Richard in an impersonal voice. "I thought it was a thing requiring more consideration than you had perhaps had time to give it——"

"Don't speak like that," interrupted his wife, fiercely. "It doesn't require any more consideration. Can't you see—I'm bitterly ashamed—it's not too late, Richard, it's not too late ! Your letter came—came in time. And I was listening to you just now, and I thought that you were speaking to me really—that you did love me after all——"

"You little fool," said Sir Richard, taking her in his arms.

Next day *The Morning Mercury* supplemented its previous announcement regarding the health of Sir Richard Strand by the statement that Sir Richard and Lady Strand were leaving on a voyage round the world immediately, and that the famous actor contemplated retiring on his return and devoting himself to a country life. The management of the Stadium Theatre also regretted that the strain of taking Sir Richard's part had been too much for that talented actor, Mr. Chippendale, who had left town for an indefinite period.

GREAT BATSMEN OF ALL TIME

BY

COL. PHILIP TREVOR, C.B.E.

MY title is one which should frighten the writer rather than the reader, and I expect the retort: "You have bitten off more than you can chew." That is as may be. At the same time I shall counter-retort that, as far as I know, no definite attempt has yet been made to classify in any kind of order the great batsmen which the game of cricket has produced. If that be so, I get a kind of consolation: I am not up against competition. Now, it is obvious that if we are to measure, we must first be agreed upon a common standard of measurement. I will state, therefore, as definitely as I can what I conceive to be a correct standard of measurement. And though I do not put it, Euclid-like, in the form of a definition, I hope nevertheless to express the general idea plainly enough.

WHAT IS A GREAT BATSMAN?

CRICKET in general is a positive game, and in particular batting is a positive art. Cricket was never intended to be a negative game, and temporary negativism is only tolerable as a necessary though melancholy prelude to positivism. It follows, therefore, that the less negativism and the more positivism you display in your performance, the better player you are. Moreover, a game of cricket (that is to say, a match at cricket) was always intended to be a time-limited affair. It was never meant to last less than half a day (unless the match should be over sooner) or more than three days. True, the Australians have for about a quarter of a century or more indulged in their own land in the unlimited time match, but that innovation was brought in solely and entirely for financial reasons. In Australia big matches are still few and travel distances are long. And as it is essential that big matches should be made to pay—they will no longer be undertaken when they do not—it is also essential that you give the man who expends much time and money in order that he may see them a reasonable return for his expenditure. The keenest cricketer would not travel from the "back blocks" to Sydney, sit in the grand stand, watch it rain for three days, and then go home again. You have no alternative, then, but to give that man the certainty of seeing the match played out.

Assuming that you agree with me, I return fortified to my main contention that cricket is a time-limited affair, and that matches are won by the side which gets the greater number of runs. Consequently, the greatest batsman is he who makes the greatest number of runs in the shortest possible time. I proceed to state the personal case, or, if you like to put it so, to give it away. I am only offering to you five batsmen for consideration, and concerning two of them I am in considerable doubt. The first three on my list are "W. G."—the Grand Old Man of Cricket—"Ranji," and Victor Trumper (in that order), and I have also to consider the peculiar but distinct claims of Gilbert Jessop and Jack Hobbs.

THE COMING OF THE "G.O.M."

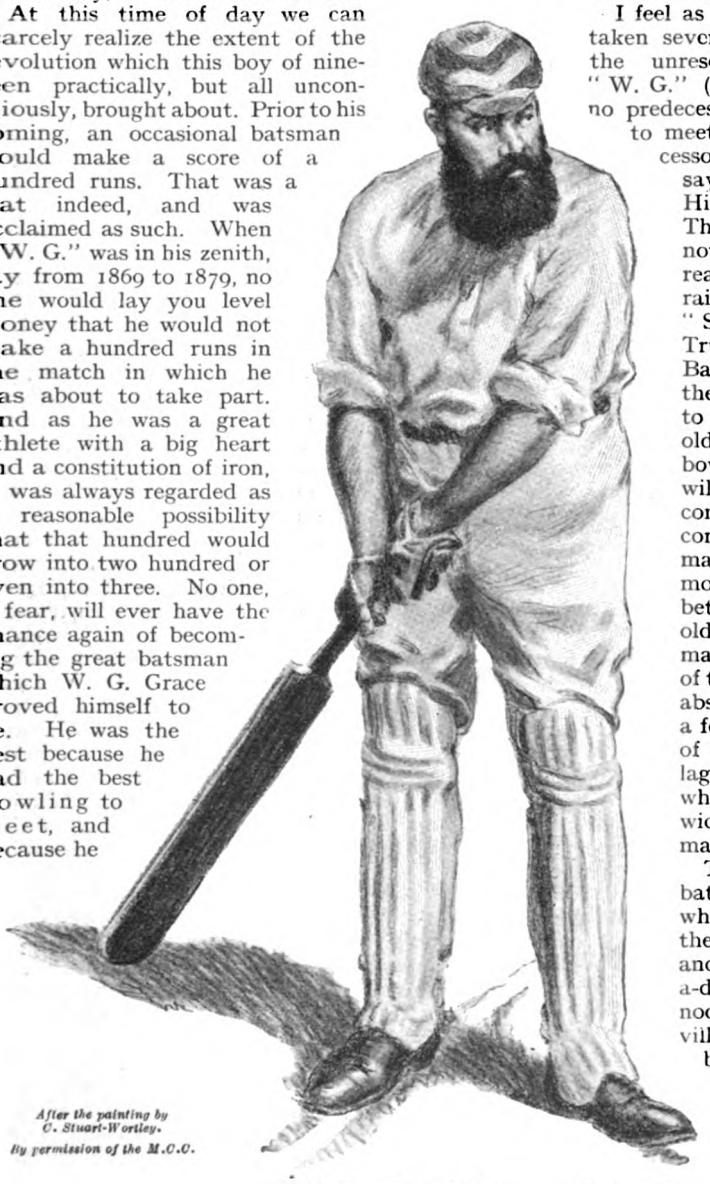
IT should be hardly necessary to premise (at the same time, I am afraid it is) that context is everything. And so if it is not a case of the Grand Old Man first and the rest nowhere, it is certainly a case of the Grand Old Man an easy first. Until W. G. Grace burst upon the cricket world, took it by storm, and became the best batsman in it at the age of nineteen, the bowler was the wild beast of the field—a murderous,

devouring wild beast. Or, to take another analogy, the batsman was the "bull" destined to be butchered to make a Spanish holiday. Some bulls last longer than others and put up a better fight in the ring. But in the end they are all dragged out of the arena dead. "W. G." was the first bull to send his bowler tormentors scuttling into the funk holes and to change the attitude of the spectators. Their applause was no longer for the matador: they shouted in ecstasy, "Bravo the bull!"

At this time of day we can scarcely realize the extent of the revolution which this boy of nineteen practically, but all unconsciously, brought about. Prior to his coming, an occasional batsman would make a score of a hundred runs. That was a feat indeed, and was acclaimed as such. When "W. G." was in his zenith, say from 1869 to 1879, no one would lay you level money that he would not make a hundred runs in the match in which he was about to take part. And as he was a great athlete with a big heart and a constitution of iron, it was always regarded as a reasonable possibility that that hundred would grow into two hundred or even into three. No one, I fear, will ever have the chance again of becoming the great batsman which W. G. Grace proved himself to be. He was the best because he had the best bowling to meet, and because he was not content merely to "defy it," as the jargon of that day used to run. He pulverized it. In the common phrase, he used to "wipe the floor with 'em." There was much indiscipline in those days in the cricket field, and we have it on record that these bowlers would go up to their captains and decline to bowl to the chap any more. Many an amateur did that, also the few professionals who felt themselves important enough players to be able to afford insubordination.

I feel as I write that I shall be taken severely to task for making the unreserved statement that "W. G." (who, by the way, had no predecessor) had better bowling to meet than any of his successors. I hear some moderns say: "Freeman, Lillywhite, Hill, Shaw, Morley, etc. That for a tale!" And not without apparent reason will some of them raise the counterblast of "Spoff, Lohmann, Turner, Trumble, Peel, Rhodes, Barnes, etc." What right, they will ask me, have I to assume that any of the old-timers were better bowlers than these? I will make the moderns a concession. Given equal conditions, I shall allow, man for man, that the moderns are intrinsically better bowlers than the older men. But in the matter of bowling the state of the wicket is everything, absolutely everything. In a few, in a very few, parts of this land there are village green wickets to-day which are as bad as the wickets on which "W. G." made his huge scores.

Take any of your modern batsmen, especially those who hold that discretion is the better part of valour, and make them play half-a-dozen Saturday afternoons running on these village greens opposed only by the village bowlers. Select men whose averages are about fifty odd runs per innings in first-class cricket. At the end of their village course I doubt if any one of



After the painting by C. Stuart-Wortley. By permission of the M.C.C.

"W. G. Grace is first—easy first, and must remain first for all time."

them would have a double figure average, and I should expect those of them who have insisted on "seeing it through" to demand the institution of a civil V.C.

THE BOWLER AND THE WICKET.

YOU can put this case in a nutshell. The bowler who can keep a consistently good length and change his pace without change of action is an infinitely better bowler on a really bad wicket (that is to say, he is far more likely to get the best of batsmen out) than any of the great bowlers of the last twenty-five years are upon these impossibly perfect wickets, which, in my opinion, threaten to ruin the science of batting, because they automatically eliminate from it the quality of daring.

Quite unconsciously and unintentionally, the Australians have done us a disservice by their high art achievements in the making of wickets. We have copied them, and whether you play to-day at Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, or the Oval, or Leicester, or Lord's, you get in continuous fine weather a wicket out of which all the life has been rolled. If the ball bowled gets up more than stump high, the players, fieldsmen as well as batsmen, congregate round the spot which has done the accursed thing, in sorrow or in anger, according to their temperaments. They are the more perplexed when a minute inspection of the turf fails to reveal the wicked secret. Should the thing occur again, there is a longer stoppage of play and much wagging of heads; while a further repetition will cause the groundsman some uneasiness. He may be hauled before the county committee for dereliction of duty, especially if the home side were batting when the unfortunate instances happened.

No, never again except by some uncommon freak of Nature shall we see first-class cricket matches played on the kind of wicket on which the great "W. G." gained his most signal triumphs. And because that is so he can never have an equal. Only in one particular are we left in the least doubt as to the supremacy of W. G. Grace's batsmanship. Could he have dealt with the "googly," and how could he have done it? Would the "googly" bowler have got from the greatest of all batsmen the same unceremonious treatment that was meted out by him to all other bowlers? I am afraid you and I must be left to guess. On the evidence available, I come to the conclusion that "W. G." would have mastered the "googly" as he mastered every other wile of any and every bowler. But that is only my opinion. Still, if he had been no better or no worse than all the other great batsmen in their treatment of the "googly," his place on the list does not suffer in consequence. He is first—easy first, and must remain first for all time.

RANJI THE WIZARD.

I PUT second on the list the wizard "Ranji." He is a very old friend of mine, and even if he were not he would not accuse me of cheek. You may call him "Ranji," too, if you like (you probably do), and he will not mind. Courteous as he is to all comers, he is apt to be a little impatient of time-wasting and time-wasters. I was talking to him at Lord's a couple of summers ago when a pompous old gentleman pushed himself between us and without apology of any kind introduced himself to the wizard. He had a question to ask, he said, and it took him an eternity to ask it. He added to its length by introducing the word "Maharajah" at two-second intervals. Boiled down, it all came to this: Which is the easier to play, fast bowling or slow? Ranji was about to reply when the pompous one "pomped" on. He expatiated in his own best vein on the difficulty of an immediate reply. He would be prepared to give the Maharajah notice of the question. Then at last Ranji spoke. "I've great pleasure in answering you at once. Slow, undoubtedly; we can all of us make a mistake if you give us time to think." The pompous one retired bewildered, and I murmured to Ranji that I supposed that exception proved the rule. Ranji had understood me all right and grinned. And yet I was wrong. Ranji never gave himself time to think. With him instant action came with instant thought, except when action was delayed on account of instant thought.

Consciously or unconsciously, Ranji himself explained the secret of his own unique success when he laid down his wonderful batting rule: "First see where the ball is going to pitch; then go to it; then hit it." But Ranji's pupil who means to follow that rule must first come to me for a bit of advice before he tries to do so: "First have the eye of a hawk; then train it." How does the vulture know the whereabouts of the dying beast? Not by smell, certainly, but by eye. Although the bird itself is beyond the reach of human sight, he is there at the business moment to do the job in hand for all that. So was Ranji's bat.

It is impossible to explain to the modern generation the wizardry of Ranji's batting. It is even difficult to inspire belief when in simple words, but with elaboration of context, you tell the young man of to-day what it was that Ranji actually did. Indeed, comparatively recently a young man who has played for England, after paying me

the compliment of assuming that I was on the side of the moderns, said: "Tell me honestly, could this Ranji really compare with all our swells to-day, or is it just a tale?" I did not convince him, for later he said to someone else, "I take it that this Ranji, if he had had to play against the swing stuff we have to deal with to-day, would not have got a run." That libel, of course, is laughable, but there is another libel on Ranji which is cruel because it is insidious. I must bring Tennyson, not the England captain, but his grandfather, to the rescue:—

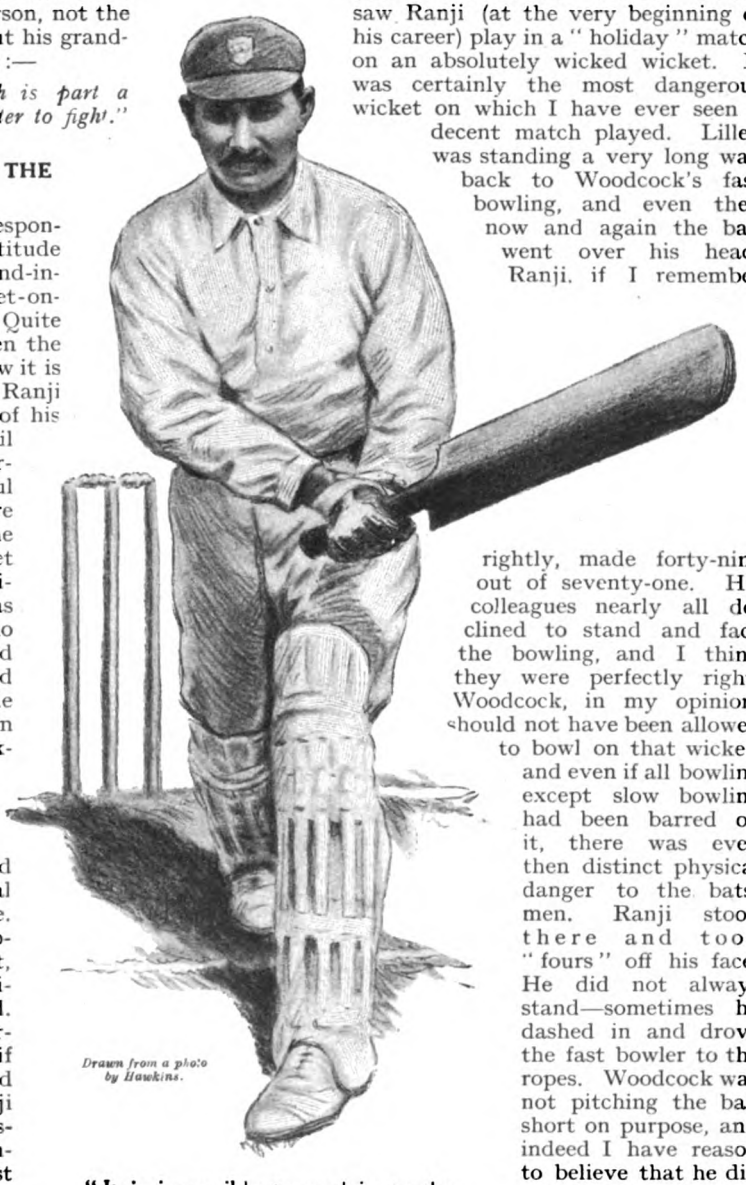
". . . a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

RANJI EXTENDS THE FIELD.

RANJI is held responsible for the attitude of the "stand-in-front-of-your-wicket-on-purpose" brigade. Quite true; but it was then the attack brigade. Now it is the funk brigade. Ranji only stood in front of his wicket to score. Until he invented and perfected his wonderful leg-glide stroke, more than one-third of the area of the cricket circle was uncultivated waste. It was no man's land; no man was put to field there. Ranji altered all that, and he made the opposing captain tired of sending expeditions there. Ranji caused him to garrison the place, and to do that of course he had to weaken other vital points of the defence.

Then Ranji, dropping the glide shot, would attack the position thus weakened. Let it never be forgotten that even if he had not invented the glide shot Ranji would have successfully challenged comparison with the best of his contemporaries. He had all the ordinary strokes of the admittedly great batsman, and these he would use after he had made the opposing captain man the defences in the leg segment of the circle.

I have indulged in one speculation about "W. G."—the "googly" speculation. I will indulge in one about Ranji. If he had played when "W. G." was in his zenith, where would he have ranked? I honestly believe that Ranji might possibly have ranked even above "W. G." I once saw Ranji (at the very beginning of his career) play in a "holiday" match on an absolutely wicked wicket. It was certainly the most dangerous wicket on which I have ever seen a decent match played. Lilley was standing a very long way back to Woodcock's fast bowling, and even then now and again the ball went over his head. Ranji, if I remember rightly, made forty-nine out of seventy-one. His colleagues nearly all declined to stand and face the bowling, and I think they were perfectly right. Woodcock, in my opinion, should not have been allowed to bowl on that wicket, and even if all bowling except slow bowling had been barred on it, there was even then distinct physical danger to the batsmen. Ranji stood there and took "fours" off his face. He did not always stand—sometimes he dashed in and drove the fast bowler to the ropes. Woodcock was not pitching the ball short on purpose, and indeed I have reason to believe that he did not like bowling on that wicket. Ranji was not then qualified



Drawn from a photo by Hawkins.

"It is impossible to explain to the modern generation the wizardry of Ranji's batting."

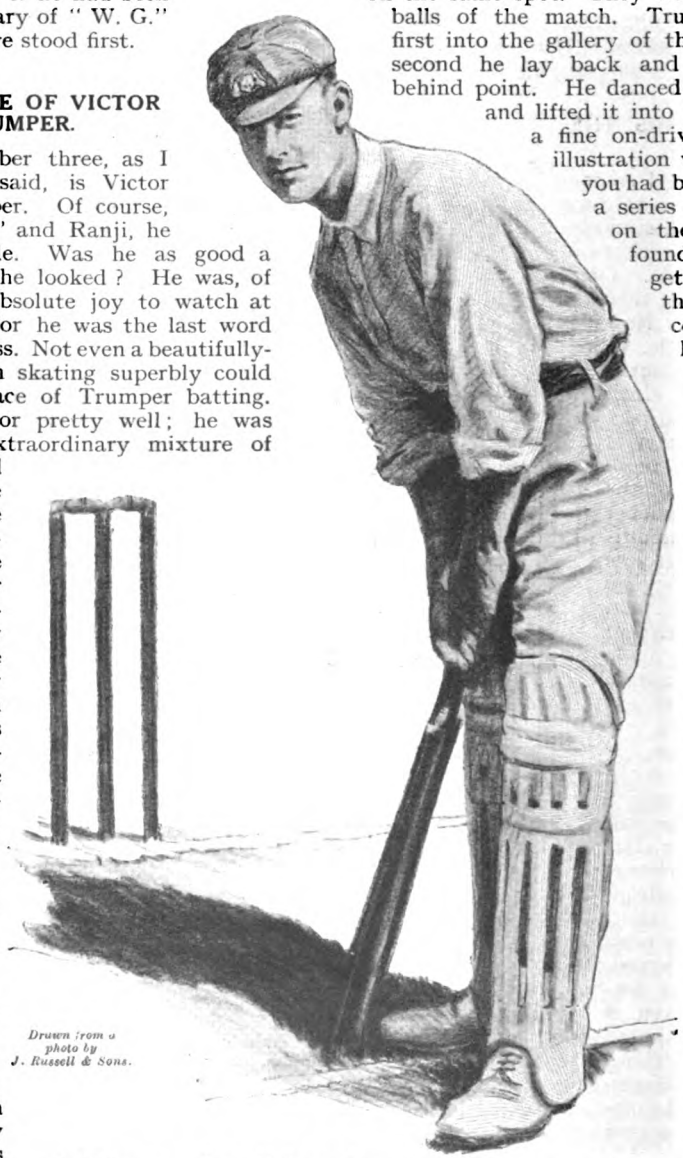
by residence to play for Sussex, but by courtesy of the other side he took part in this " holiday " game. It was the first time I had seen him bat, and I went away dazed, as one who has seen a miracle performed.

" Oh, help ! " I said to my father and brother ; " if he can carry on like that on a cart-track, what will he do on the lawn at Hove ? " In vain my father talked to me of " W. G." I could only reply, " What can be more wonderful than what we have just seen ? " No, Ranji comes second all right, but if he had been a contemporary of " W. G." he might have stood first.

THE GRACE OF VICTOR TRUMPER.

MY number three, as I have said, is Victor Trumper. Of course, like " W. G." and Ranji, he was self-made. Was he as good a batsman as he looked ? He was, of course, an absolute joy to watch at the wicket, for he was the last word in gracefulness. Not even a beautifully-made woman skating superbly could rival the grace of Trumper batting. I knew Victor pretty well ; he was the most extraordinary mixture of modesty and confidence that I have ever encountered. He could never be lured, although many tried to lure him, into any expression in words of his belief in himself. Yet he was appreciative enough when you talked to him of the batting of others. Still, the self-confidence was obvious enough when he faced the bowler, whom he literally treated as of no consequence. Neither " W. G." nor Ranji made the bowler look quite so foolish as Victor Trumper did.

Trumper, of course, made thousands of runs in his short career, but the reason I rank him so high is that he could have made tens of thousands more. He was an artist, and he loathed repeating himself. Once, in a match at Lord's, Schofield Haigh, then the best bowler of the day on a rain-damaged wicket, bowled Victor three balls in succession, each one of which was a perfect length, and all three pitched practically on the same spot. They were the opening balls of the match. Trumper put the first into the gallery of the hotel. The second he lay back and cut for four behind point. He danced into the third and lifted it into Q stand with a fine on-drive. This one illustration will suffice. If you had bowled " W. G." a series of half volleys on the off, and he found that he could get each one of them through the covers for four, he would have gone on getting them through. And even Ranji would have resisted the temptation to do the original thing better than Victor. But I repeat that Trumper just could not repeat himself. His artistic cricket temperament fought against repetition.



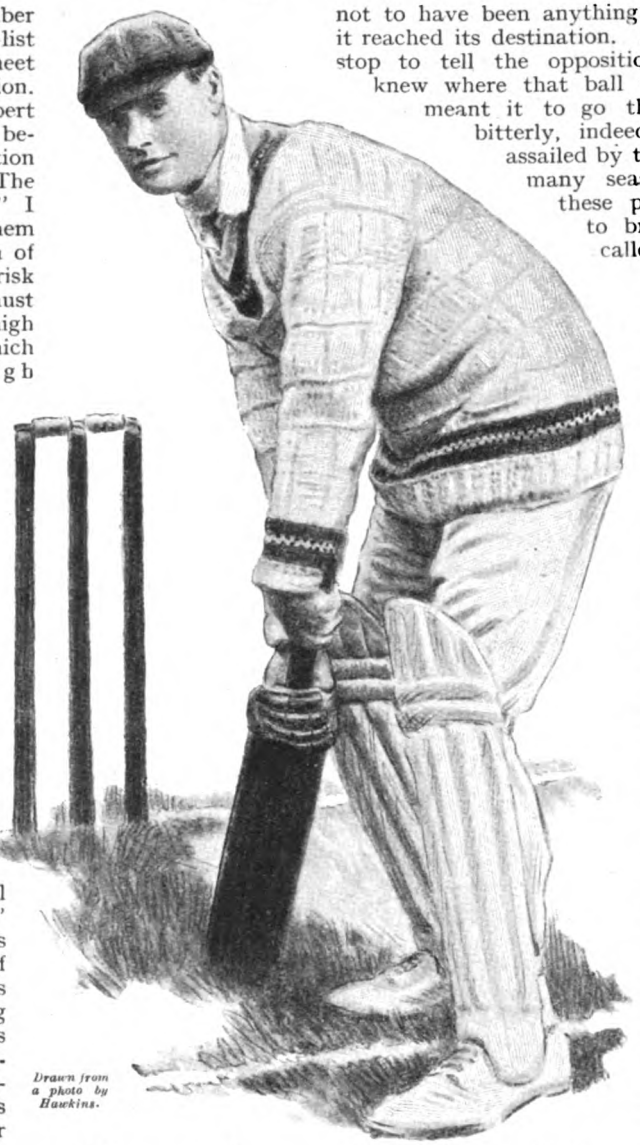
Drawn from a photo by J. Russell & Sons.

" Not even a beautifully-made woman skating superbly could rival the grace of Trumper batting."

JESSOP THE REVOLUTIONARY.

IT is with unassailable confidence I put first, second, and third in my list of batsmen of all time W. G. Grace, Ranji, and Trumper.

I come to number four on that list prepared to meet stout opposition. My man is Gilbert Jessop. And before the opposition begin to cry: "The noes have it!" I would refer them to my definition of great. At the risk of wearying I must insist that the high standard which comes of high endeavour is essential to justify the application of "great" to any batsman. As I have already maintained, both Ranji and Trumper set themselves a higher standard of batting than the great "W. G." A simple illustration of this contention will, I hope, make a universal appeal. "W. G." could hit sixes with the best of them, but his practical batting code was always success, long-sustained success. So, times out of number he hit a four when he could have hit a six. For nothing was "W. G." more remarkable than for his shrewd "horse sense." You could not be caught when you carpeted the ball, and his instinctive art, for he never learnt it, I think, of placing the ball enabled him to get a four almost every time.



Drawn from a photo by Hawkins.

"Jessop was the greatest hitter who ever lived, easily and absolutely."

On the delicacy of the touch of Ranji, and on the unique variety of the stroke-making possessed by Trumper, I have already insisted. In high endeavour, Gilbert Jessop went one better still. He must needs thrash the ball. Indeed, there ought not to have been anything of it left when it reached its destination. And here I will stop to tell the opposition that Jessop knew where that ball was going and meant it to go there. He was bitterly, indeed continuously, assailed by the orthodox for many seasons, nor were these people ashamed to bring in the so-called argument of luck to their aid. All the old stories about the blacksmith on the village green were trotted out to prove that the greatest hitter who ever lived was a mere country cricketer. For he was the greatest hitter who ever lived, easily and absolutely. Stubborn as the stubbornest of political Tories were the drawing-room batsmen, and the drawing-room critics were even more stubborn when they declined to admit Jessop to the inner circle of the elect. But, like Disraeli, he lived to rule the elect. With him sheer record of fact won in the end.

If I said that Jessop tried to punish severely seven-tenths of the balls bowled to him, I should be considerably under the mark. Jessop got only fifty-three hundreds in first-class matches. But no fewer than four times did he get two-hundreds in the same match, a performance which has only twice been equalled and once surpassed. And I would add that his more successful rivals in this matter were all careful players. To get a hundred runs at all on Jessopian lines is to achieve something of a feat.

If that is so, what must it mean to get on those lines two two-hundreds in one match against first-class bowling? A charmed life, indeed, but to live it a man must make his own charm! And remember, please, that Jessop always had appearances against him. He did everything in the way in which all teachers of cricket agreed it should not be done. He had neither gracefulness nor style, nor was it always brought home, even to the observant, that he had method.

Jessop was not merely the greatest hitter who ever lived, but also the finest firm-footed strokesman. Even Ranji and Trumper realized that there were certain batting impossibilities. Jessop no doubt realized what he would have called practical impossibilities, but he refused to recognize them. The ball bowled had to be smashed; it is all summed up in that. Relying on the unique value of the setting of a supreme standard in batting, I place Jessop fourth on my list, and, like Warren Hastings, I stand aghast at my own moderation.

WHERE DOES HOBBS STAND?

AND what about Jack Hobbs? He is not my number five, because if you do not class him first of all I do not know where you are to class him. Here you come to refining and super-refining. What would have happened had Jack Hobbs been an amateur? That is to say, had he been in a position untrammelled in any way to play for himself and bat for his own reputation. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not accusing "W. G.," Ranji, or Trumper of batting for themselves and not for their sides, whilst obviously to make such an accusation against Jessop would be merely laughable. By batting for themselves these men were most clearly batting for their sides. Generally speaking, Trumper got better support than the others, but, with this exception, the side for which they played regularly wanted all the runs they could get from them. Suppose Hobbs in a position to attempt, for the mere fun of the thing, to make the strokes in which Ranji, Trumper, and Jessop delighted. Hobbs has got sixty, and his Surrey partners are proving to him regularly and conclusively that they are "rabbity." Tate bowls Hobbs his best ball. Hobbs allows himself to attempt a fancy stroke and his middle stump cavorts. Hobbs retires and mounts the pavilion steps, amused and smiling. An anxious Surrey committee-man, almost in tears, groans to the great batsman as he passes:—

"What happened, Jack?"

"Oh! I thought I'd try the pull shot on that one of Maurice's and put it on to the gasworks. I'll do it the next time."

Imagine Hobbs trying to carry out his threat and failing! Surely all the Surrey committee-men would be summoned by wireless! To waste money may be forgiven a professional batsman, but to waste runs never. Further illustration is unnecessary.

A professional batsman cannot bat as he likes, and the man who does not bat as he likes does not bat as well as he can. Every now and then when I see a real Hobbs innings played I find myself murmuring: "I wish you and 'W. G.' and Ranji and poor Victor Trumper and Jessop had all been contemporaries in those bad old days, I mean those good old days, when the ball took the delightful liberty of misbehaving itself. Whatever had happened to you five, the rest would have been practically nowhere."

Hobbs scores one remarkable point in batsmanship. He deals with the "googly" bowling better than any man who ever lived. Here he is supreme because "googly" bowling is already a thing of the past. Its inventor, B. J. T. Bosanquet, after all only learnt his own alphabet. Ernest Vogler and Aubrey Faulkner became past-masters of the thing. Neither of them troubled Jack Hobbs on turf or matting, and here I dare to ask: Is not the man capable of descrying and detecting the "googly" also capable of descrying and detecting any wile of any bowler?

I come, then, to the definite conclusion that Jack Hobbs must rank very high in the list of great batsmen of all times. Narrowed down to its most practical limits, I take it that the era of great batsmen was roughly the last ten years of the nineteenth century. For during those ten years the powers of "W. G.," despite his amazing performance in 1895, were on the wane, and Hobbs had not yet appeared. Other batsmen with historical claims to fame were in their zenith, for the contemporaries of Ranji, Trumper, and Jessop were Archie Maclaren, Charles Fry, Tip Foster, Johnnie Tyldesley, and Tom Hayward. I put severe restraint on myself when I decline to add to that list. No; since that period I can only put Hobbs confidently among the elect, though I lay myself open to severe cross-examination were the claims of Aubrey Faulkner and Charlie Macartney to come up for consideration.

Hobbs, Macartney, and Faulkner are all over forty years of age. For some time past I have been scanning the cricket horizon. I do not see a ghost of a sign of the coming of the real "young 'un" thereon, except Hammond, the young Gloucestershire batsmen, or, if his health does not fail him, young "Duleep."

"THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES"

A Great "BULLDOG DRUMMOND" Serial

By

"SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

SYNOPSIS OF THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.

Joe Dixon, the narrator of the story, had joined Bulldog Drummond in the hunt for Bulldog's wife, Phyllis, who had been abducted by the woman Irma in revenge for the death of her late partner in crime, the bestial Carl Peterson, whom Bulldog had killed. Irma, in a letter, had explained to Bulldog that his wife was safe, that certain clues would be given him which, if followed up, might lead to death or to his wife's rescue; but that if the police were put on the trail Phyllis would be killed immediately. Various clues had led Bulldog and his five friends to a gloomy, uninhabited house near Drayminster, where they had a wonderful escape from death by drowning in a cellar, but had tricked Irma's accomplices into believing that Bulldog, Sinclair, and Joe Dixon had been trapped. There they discovered that the next clue was a baffling acrostic in the Personal column of *The Times*.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH THE THIRD CLUE IS SOLVED.

IT had been unanimously decided that it would be unsafe for Drummond, Sinclair, and me to leave before nightfall if we were to avoid any risk of being spotted. And so beyond mentioning that the beer expired shortly after midday, that Toby Sinclair revoked twice at bridge and was soundly beaten by Drummond for his pains, and that I got an acute attack of the hiccups due to ale on an empty stomach, I will draw a veil over our doings. Quiet reigned on the Western Front, broken only by the curses of the particular individual who was, at the moment, wrestling with the doggerel in *The Times*.

Drummond from the outset gave it up. So it was left to the rest of us to try and solve it. And honesty compels me to admit that we failed—utterly.

"A lily with the plural put before."

That seemed to give Slily. Toby Sinclair insisted that there was a loch of that name somewhere in the Hebrides, but on being pressed was not quite sure it wasn't an island off the coast of Cork. And that was about as far as we got. Except for Achilles: I got that.

"Dipped in the river Styx one part alone stayed dry."

That seemed to point to the Achilles Statue, an unsuitable spot, as Drummond pointed out moodily, for erecting a booby-trap. And we were all somewhat moody when we left at ten that night for his house in London. It was a risk coming to his house at all, but it had to be run, since all his props for make-up were there. And after

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a short pause the back door was opened by a manservant.

"Have you seen anyone loitering about the house, Denny?" said Drummond.

"No, sir. But a man called this afternoon and asked for you."

"What sort of a man?"

"A stranger, sir. And I am inclined to think, not an Englishman."

"What did you say?"

"The truth, sir. I said you were away."

Drummond looked thoughtful.

"Look here, Peter—we've got to try and ride them off. I'm tolerably certain we weren't spotted coming in here, but it looks as if they were watching the front. Go with Ted and drive up openly to the house. Ring the bell. When Denny comes—tell him the news in a voice broken with grief. Tell him I'm dead. Tell him twice if you think the blighter outside hasn't heard."

And it was while we were waiting for them to come that I had an idea. Old Tom Jenkinson. If any man in London could solve the acrostic he could. A former schoolmaster of mine now retired, and a member of my club, he still appeared to regard me as a dirty and ink-stained schoolboy. But over acrostics, riddles, or crosswords he was a perfect genius. I said as much to Drummond.

"Splendid," he remarked. "Then go and scribble a line to him, old boy, explaining what we want—and I'll send it round by Denny."

"DEAR Mr. Jenkinson," I wrote—

"I would be deeply obliged to you if you would send me the solution of the enclosed rhyme. It represents a town or locality or place of some sort, presumably in the British Isles. It is a matter of urgent importance that I should get the answer as soon as possible. Knowing you, I feel sure that you can solve it at once, and the bearer of this note will wait for a reply. I hope Mrs. Jenkinson is in the best of health.

"Yours sincerely,

"JOE DIXON."

"Splendid," said Drummond. "Peter has been, and according to Denny there was a man loitering by the railings who overheard what was said. Moreover, he's gone now, so it may have done some good. Anyway, we'll send Denny round with that note at once."

"Go out by the back door," he said as his servant came in, "and take this to the Junior Reform. Wait for an answer. And don't forget—if anyone asks you—I'm dead."

"Very good, sir," said the man, impassively.

An hour passed, and two, and suddenly Drummond lifted his head, listening.

"Denny's back," he said. "Now we shall know."

His voice was quiet, but there was a strained look in his eyes as he watched the door. Should we have the answer, or did it mean further waiting? And mercifully it was the former; his servant had brought an answer.

"Dear Dixon," it ran—

"Before giving you the solution of your ridiculous little problem there are one or two points to which I would draw your attention. If the matter is of urgent importance, obviously you require the answer as soon as possible—a clear case of tautology. Secondly, your interest in Mrs. Jenkinson's health, though doubtless well meant, is a little tardy. She died some five years ago.

"However—to your problem. My opinion of your intellect was always microscopic: even so, it is incredible that anyone out of an asylum could have failed to solve it at sight—knowing that it was meant to represent a place. Let us take the first stanza. Clearly the last line has nothing to do with it: it is put in to cheer you on when you have interpreted the other three. Now, of course, I do not know the nature of the lady you met last night: your repellent habits are, I am glad to say, a closed book to me. But in this case she was obviously not a thing of beauty. *Ergo*—she was ugly or plain. But few places contain the letters UGLY: whereas there are many Plains in the British Isles. One in particular leaps to the mind—Salisbury Plain.

"You may at this point ask what relation Salisbury has to a lily with the plural put before. With your abysmal ignorance of everything remotely approaching to culture you probably will. The ancient name for Salisbury, my dear Dixon, was Sarum. To this day you will see the word written on many of the milestones around the town. Well, I suppose even you have heard of an Arum Lily. And therefore the first stanza is solved and gives us—Salisbury Plain.

"A large area—comprising as it does a considerable portion of the county of Wiltshire. The second stanza is clearly designed to narrow our field. It does—to a remarkable degree. The first line could, of course, be solved by a child of six. But as Ruff's Guide to the Turf is doubtless more familiar to you than Homer's 'Iliad' I shall assume that your mind has not even reached that infantile standard. Achilles was the son of Peleus by Thetis, one of the Nereids.

And ancient mythology tells us that to make him invulnerable she dipped him in the Styx, holding him by the heel. Hence the phrase, the heel of Achilles—which was the only part that remained dry. The first line therefore gives us Heel.

" ' The cry of every schoolboy.'

" What the repulsive little horrors call it now, I do not know—but when you were one of them, what word rose most often to your lips? What was your moan—your everlasting bleat? Tuck. You gorged your bellies on tuck, and slept, as a result, in school—making disgusting noises. Tuck, my boy—tuck.

" ' That should give a man.'

" Have you never read ' Ivanhoe ' ? Have you never heard of Robin Hood, and the fat and jovial Friar Tuck, his constant companion and father confessor ?

" And so we have Heel, Tuck, and Friar. A glance at the verse will show us that Tuck is to be left out—and that reduces us to Heel and Friar.

" On Salisbury Plain is an ancient Druidical temple known as Stonehenge. Outside the main circle is a great stone—the sun-stone. This is the point where a spectator, centrally placed within the temple, would see the sun rise on Midsummer Day. And the common name for the sun-stone is the Friar's Heel.

" Wherefore, the solution of your childish effusion is the monolith known as the Friar's Heel at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain. And in conclusion I can only endorse most wholeheartedly the terse and apt description of you given in the middle of the last line.

" Faithfully yours,
" THOMAS JENKINSON."

" I GOT Achilles, at any rate, confound the old ass," I remarked, as I put the letter down. " Well, now we know."

" Stonehenge," said Drummond. " Close to Amesbury."

He went to the telephone.

" Peter," he said as soon as he got through, " come round at once—all of you. Back door, as before."

He sat down and stared at me.

" I wonder what is the best rig for you ? " he pondered. " In a way, you're the least important, as only the man and the woman of last night know you."

" And our venerable friend of the Angler's Rest," I reminded him.

" True. I'd forgotten him. Still, a moustache, a pair of spectacles, and the earnest air of a tourist should meet the case. And if you see any of those three, efface yourself. Toby—I've got a very good line in elderly professors for you. Butterflies, I think. You can gambol lightly over Salisbury Plain making a noise like a killing-bottle."

" Thanks, dear old boy," said Sinclair. " What are you going to be ? "

" That remains to be seen," answered Drummond, with an enigmatic smile. " I've got two or three half-formed ideas."

The smile faded slowly from his face.

" But whatever it is, I'm thinking that the sooner we begin to put the fear of God into this bunch the better."

A minute or so later Peter Darrell and the other two came in.

" You've solved it ? " asked Jerningham.

" A pal of Dixon's has," said Drummond. " A stone called the Friar's Heel at Stonehenge. You can read the letter later."

" And you can read this one now," said Darrell. " Delivered by hand."

It consisted of one line :—

" Read to-day's *Times*. Personal column."

" So she really does think we're dead, Peter." Drummond rubbed his hands together. " Excellent. However, let's get down to it. In the first place, from now on you three have got to run this show alone. Officially, that's to say. And, dash it all, I don't like it."

" Cut it out, you ass," laughed Jerningham.

" It's all very fine and large, Ted—but they mean business. And I don't want any casualties. I believe that what Dixon said is absolutely right. Whether she is insane or not is beside the point : there's not much sign of insanity about her plans up to date. But from what he heard her say this morning we are all for it, and Phyllis as well, before she goes to join Peterson. She was never remarkable, was she, for the quality of mercy. And now that she's obsessed with this idea, she will be utterly merciless. It's revenge run mad. So for the love of Heaven be careful. I'd never forgive myself if one of you took it in the neck."

" We'll be careful all right, old boy," said Darrell, quietly. " But Phyllis has got to be found, hasn't she ? "

" I know that. But I'm wondering if it wouldn't be better for you three to chuck it and leave it to me."

" We have but little desire for a rough house," said Jerningham, " but there's going to be one in a moment unless you cease talking tripe."

" Well, well ; so be it," grinned Drummond. " But now let's get down to it. From what Toby says, the place is stiff with people all the day. So by day there can't be any risk. Now, it's possible that all we are going to get there is another clue—in

fact, it's probable. I really don't see how they can rig up anything in a public place like that which can be dangerous—even at night. And so as I see it—there's just one thing to fear, and that can only happen at night."

"What's that?" said Darrell.

"Common or garden murder, Peter," said Drummond, gravely. "There may be a clue; on the other hand, it may be a trap."

"WHAT is your suggestion, Hugh?" said Jerningham, after a while.

"This, Ted. From what Dixon overheard Irma say, this little show will not be concluded until they've got you—all three. I may be wrong, but I don't think they will try for you in London. In her own distorted way she is going to play this game through to the end in the way she intended. And, therefore, nothing further will take place until you come to the Friar's Heel. Now my proposal is this. But for this freak pal of Dixon's, Heaven knows when you would have solved that last clue. So there will be nothing surprising about it if you take at least a couple of days over finding the answer. So until I wire for you—you will remain in London, ready to leave the instant you hear from me."

"And you three?" asked Darrell.

"We'll go down in disguise and spy out the land. Maybe we shall find nothing; maybe the clue, if there is one at the Friar's Heel, will only be given to one of you. If so, I'll wire you. But it's possible that we shall find the clue, and get a short cut to what we want. So I shall rig up Toby and Dixon to-morrow, and they will go to some pub in Amesbury."

"What's your own game, Hugh?"

"That, old boy, you will know in due course. For the time being I think it's best that none of you should know. It's going to be touch and go—this show—and I'd sooner have an absolutely free hand. And, finally, don't forget the old Froth Blowers' dirge. Twice for danger. And one other thing. If you want me, a line to John Bright at the Post Office, Amesbury."

When they'd gone, Drummond sat for some time staring in front of him. And at last he rose with a grunt.

"Come on; bed. I hope to Heaven they'll be all right in London."

He showed me to my room. Then he paused by the door. "Deuced good of you and all that, Dixon, to mix yourself up in this show. Though, 'pon my soul, I don't know what we'd have done without you."

And, astounding though it may seem, I can recall no remark made to me in my life that has occasioned me greater pleasure. Whether it had anything to do with it, I don't know, but certain it is that no sooner had my head touched the pillow than I was asleep. And the next thing I knew was his servant shaking me by the shoulder.

"Nine o'clock, sir," he said. "And the Captain would like you to come along to the music-room as soon as you've had your bath."

The music-room resembled nothing so much as an old-clothes shop. Suits of all sorts and descriptions littered the floor; wigs, false hair, and the usual make-up appliances were on the table.

Drummond was standing in the middle with two complete strangers by him. One of them was obviously of the hairdresser type; the other was an elderly man of scholastic appearance.

"Who is the old bloke?" I whispered to Drummond as I passed him.

"My dear fellow," he cried, "excuse me. I quite forgot. This is a very old friend of mine—Professor Stanton—Mr. Dixon. He's come to give Toby some advice on butterflies."

"A fascinating hobby, Mr. Dixon," remarked the Professor, and I stared at him in amazement. Surely I knew that voice.

"Great Scott!" I muttered. "It's you, Sinclair."

They all laughed.

"What an amazing disguise!" I cried. "But for your voice I'd never have known you."

"And under the ministrations of the excellent Albert the result will be the same in your case," remarked Drummond. "Albert, I think a respectable bank clerk of about thirty-five is what we want. We'll give you a rather badly cut suit of plus-fours, and a cap. Horn-rimmed spectacles, Albert. Now let's have a look."

The three of them stared at me critically.

"Get into these clothes," said Drummond. "I can't be sure till you're out of that dressing-gown. Yes, Albert: that will do."

"I think so, sir," said Albert, complacently, and at that moment I saw myself in the glass.

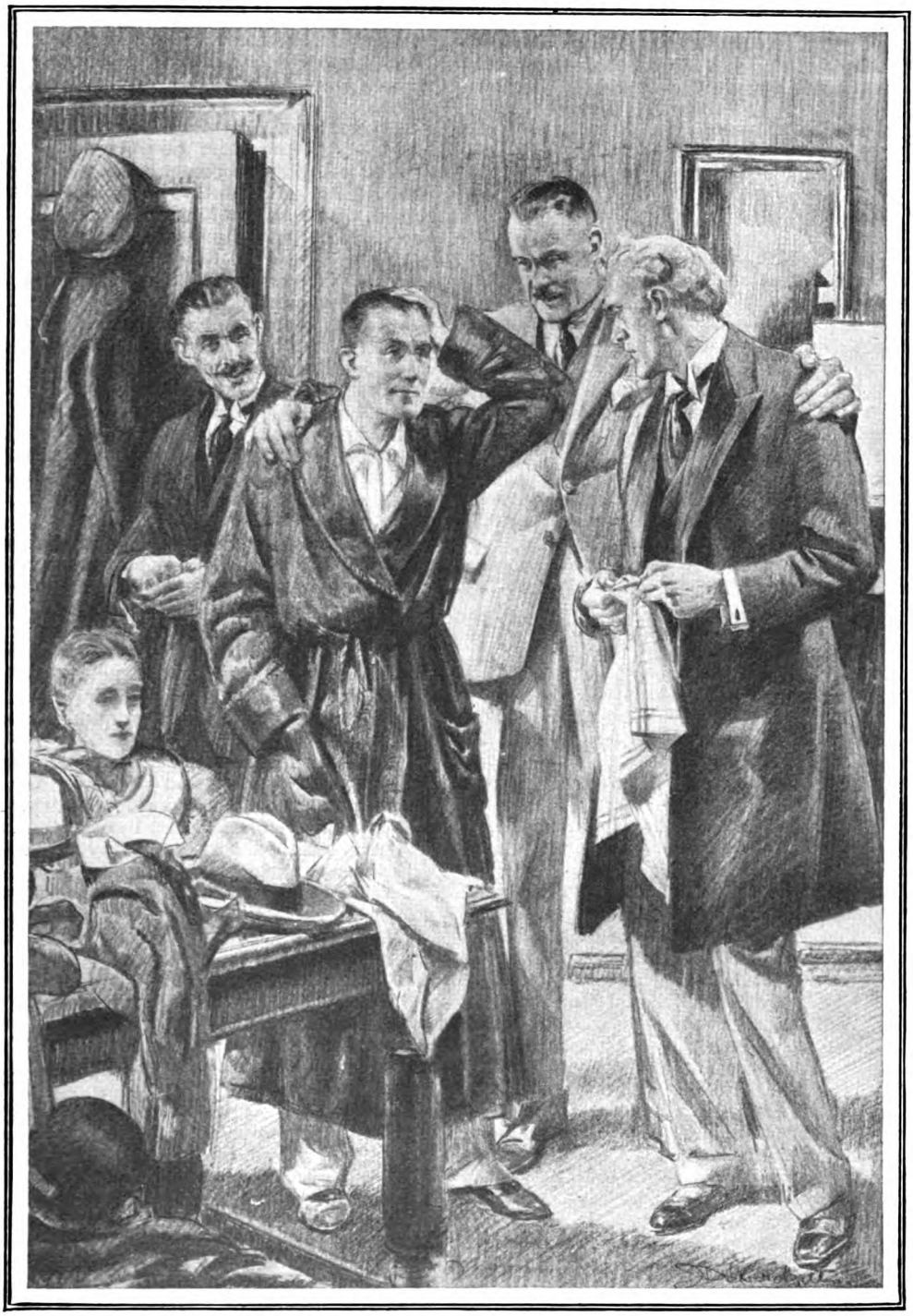
The shock was ghastly, but at the same time I was forced to admit that the result was amazing.

"Then that's finished," said Drummond. "Now the pub for you is the Amesbury Castle. I think you'd better arrive separately, and you can strike up an acquaintance afterwards."

He smiled suddenly and held out his hand.

"So long, boys. Leave the house by the back door separately, and for Heaven's sake, Dixon, try not to appear self-conscious. Be a City clerk: don't only look it."

A sudden thought struck me as I walked away from the house. I had no baggage.



I stared at him in amazement. Surely I knew that voice! "Great Scott!" I muttered. "It's you, Sinclair."

For a while I debated between the rival merits of a rucksack and a hand-bag, deciding finally on the former. Then I bought a couple of shirts and some socks, and thus equipped I made my way to Paddington. The last phase of the game, though I little knew it, had begun.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH I GO TO THE FRIAR'S HEEL BY DAY.

I ARRIVED at the Amesbury Castle in time for a late lunch. An aged waiter, with most of yesterday's ration on his shirt front, presided over the dining-room.

"Many people staying here?" I asked.

"Full up for lunch," he said. "And the hotel be fairly full, too. A bunch of people came last night. Lumme! 'ere's another."

I glanced at the door to see Toby Sinclair coming in.

"Splendid!" he cried, in a high voice that nearly made me laugh. "Food, waiter, for the inner man, and then to resume my search. Tell me, have you seen a *Bragmatobia fuliginosa?*"

The waiter recoiled a step.

"A 'ow much?" he demanded. "There's beef, 'am, tongue, and pertaters."

"And only this morning," went on Toby, "I am convinced I perceived a *Psecadia pusiella*. Members, my dear sir," he said to me, "of the great family of *lepidoptera*. In other words, butterflies."

"Beef, 'am, or tongue?" said the waiter, resignedly.

"Ham, waiter, with a fragment of chutney. You are, sir," he turned again to me, "on a walking tour, perhaps?"

"That is my idea," I said. "But I propose to make this hotel my headquarters."

"You may possibly care to come out with me once or twice. My name is Stanton—Professor Stanton."

"Mine is Seymour," I told him.

"Well, Mr. Seymour——" He broke off suddenly. "Dixon," he said to me urgently, as the waiter left the room, "there's a man in the lounge outside I want you to have a look at. I only got a glimpse of him that night at the Mere, but I believe it's the bloke who was with the woman. Anyway, he's got his hand bandaged up—— No, Mr. Seymour, a lifetime is all too short for my entrancing hobby. Bless me! Waiter, I think this cheese must have been here for two years. Yes, sir—a lifetime is too short. Nevertheless I hope to capture the *Cyligramma fluctuosa* before I die. Are you doing anything this afternoon?"

"I thought of going over to Stonehenge."

He nodded.

"We'll go over to Stonehenge. I wonder if one can hire a car?"

And at that moment a man passed through the lounge. He looked in at the door, gave us both a casual glance, and then disappeared.

"It is certainly our friend of the Mere," I said. "I'd know him anywhere."

"We've got to watch him, Dixon. Waiter," he called out, "is it possible to hire a motor-car? Mr. Seymour and I were thinking of visiting Stonehenge."

"There be a Ford down at the garage," answered the waiter. "Be you staying 'ere or do you want the bill?"

"Staying," said Toby. "Room twenty-three. Well, Mr. Seymour, shall we go and see about this Ford? I have an idea that I might perhaps see a *Cerostoma asperella* if my luck is in. Ah! pardon, sir—pardon."

He had bumped into a man just outside the door—the man we had both recognized.

"I trust I have not hurt your hand at all," he went on earnestly. "So clumsy of me."

The man muttered something and sheered off, whilst I followed Sinclair into the street.

"The gentleman was suspiciously close to the door, Dixon," he said, quietly.

"Still, I don't think he suspected us."

"Not as us, perhaps. But I think the whole bunch of them suspect everybody. Good Lord!"

His voice changed suddenly to that of the Professor.

"And so, my dear Seymour, if we can get this car I will try and show you some of those beauties of Nature which I feel sure are as yet quite unsuspected by you."

A man brushed past, favouring us both with a penetrating stare.

"What's the matter?" I said, when he was out of earshot.

"Just for a moment I thought the dead had come to life," said Sinclair. "You saw that man who passed us?"

"Yes, I saw him. Is he one of them?"

"I haven't a notion," he remarked. "Look here, I'm just going to drop a line to Hugh, and I'll tell you the rest when we get in the car."

The Ford turned out to be available, and I got in and waited for Sinclair, who was scribbling a note in the office.

"We'll post it in some pillar-box as we go out," he said as he joined me. "Better than leaving it at the main post-office. Stonehenge, please, driver."

"What did you say?" I asked, when we'd started.

"I told him about the man at the pub," he answered. "And also about that other bloke. Of course, there may be nothing in it, but the likeness is really so astounding

to a man we once had dealings with, and who was one of the leaders of this very gang, that for a moment I thought it was him."

" Is there any reason why it shouldn't be? "

" Every reason. He died most substantially three or four years ago. Hugh killed him. Of course this is all Greek to you, so I'll tell you about it. When we first bumped into Carl Peterson, now defunct, and the lady you saw at the Mere, it was at the instigation of Mrs. Drummond—before she was Mrs. Drummond. It's altogether too long a story to tell you the whole thing ; but, in a nutshell, they were engaged in a foul criminal plot. Assisting them was one of the biggest swine it has ever been my misfortune to run into—a man called Henry Lakington. He was a mixture of chemist, doctor, thief, murderer, and utter blackguard. But clever—darned clever. He wasn't as big a man as Peterson, because he hadn't got the vision—but he was a far more ineffable swab. Peterson, at any rate, at times had the saving sense of humour ; this man had none. And in the course of our little contest Drummond fought him and killed him. It was one or the other, and that's a bit dangerous for the other, if the one is Hugh. Now that man who passed us is the living spit of Henry Lakington ; he might be—and for all I know is—his twin brother. And the coincidence struck me as so peculiar that I thought I'd mention it to Hugh. Of course, there's probably nothing in it. Hullo ! here we are ! "

IT was years since I had been to Stonehenge, and emphatically the impressiveness of the ruin had not been increased by the military buildings that had sprung up around it.

At the time we arrived several empty chars-à-bancs were standing on the road, and crowds of trippers were wandering round the huge stones escorted by guides. And having paid our modest entrance fee we joined a group.

" There, ladies and gentlemen, you have the slaughter stone on which the victim was sacrificed as the first rays of the sun, rising over the Friar's Heel, touched his body. Inside you perceive the altar stone. . . ."

The guide droned on, but I paid scant attention. My thoughts were concerned with the present, and not with the past. Was Drummond right in his surmise ? Was this place—the scene of so much death in the dawn of history—to be the setting for murder as merciless as anything of old ? What he had said was correct in one respect certainly ; if Darrell, or any of them, was done to death, it would be, to the world at large, a crime without motive. And the instant those three were disposed of, the end would come for Mrs. Drummond.

I glanced round : Toby Sinclair had wandered off and joined another group. And it suddenly occurred to me that it could do no harm to make a closer inspection of the Friar's Heel. It was a perfectly ordinary and normal thing to do, and would not cause any suspicion, even if our opponents had spies in the crowd. And there was always the bare possibility of finding a clue.

I wandered over to it, to find a big man in rough seafaring clothes staring at it curiously.

" Rum old pile, this, guv'nor, ain't it ? I've seen the same sort of thing at Stornoway up in Lewis. Though I reckons the stones there ain't as big. This Friar's Heel as they call it is a big 'un all right."

I looked at him curiously, out of the corner of my eye. Could this be another clue ? If it was it meant we had been spotted.

" Stopping in these parts ? " he went on.

" For a few days," I said.

" Funny sort of country," he remarked. " Good for the soldiers, I suppose, but it's a bit too bare for me. I like it with a few more woods and trees. Still—it's fine, especially at night. I reckon that these pebbles would look grand with the moonlight shining on them.

" I don't suppose anyone ever comes to a place like this at night," he went on. " And yet it's a rum thing. I was bicycling along that road late last night—been seeing some friends of mine—and it seemed to me as if there was something moving about the place. Round this very stone. Of course, it was dark, and I may have been mistaken, but there ain't generally much wrong with my sight."

Last night, I reflected. Had the clue been guessed at once, Darrell and the other two could have been at the Friar's Heel by then. Had there been someone here in readiness ? To give them a further clue, or to deal with them—otherwise.

" You didn't investigate ? " I asked, casually. " See if you were right ? "

" Not me, guv'nor. None o' my business. And one of Ben Harker's rules in life has always been to mind his own business."

He produced a well-used old briar from his pocket, and proceeded to fill it from a weather-beaten leather pouch.

" Have a fill ?" he said. " Ship's tobacco ; the best in the world."

" A bit strong for me, I'm afraid, Mr. Harker," I thanked him. " We miserable City clerks are hardly used to that sort of smoke."

" You prefer them fags, I suppose," he grunted. " Ah ! well, everyone to his own taste. Personally . . ."

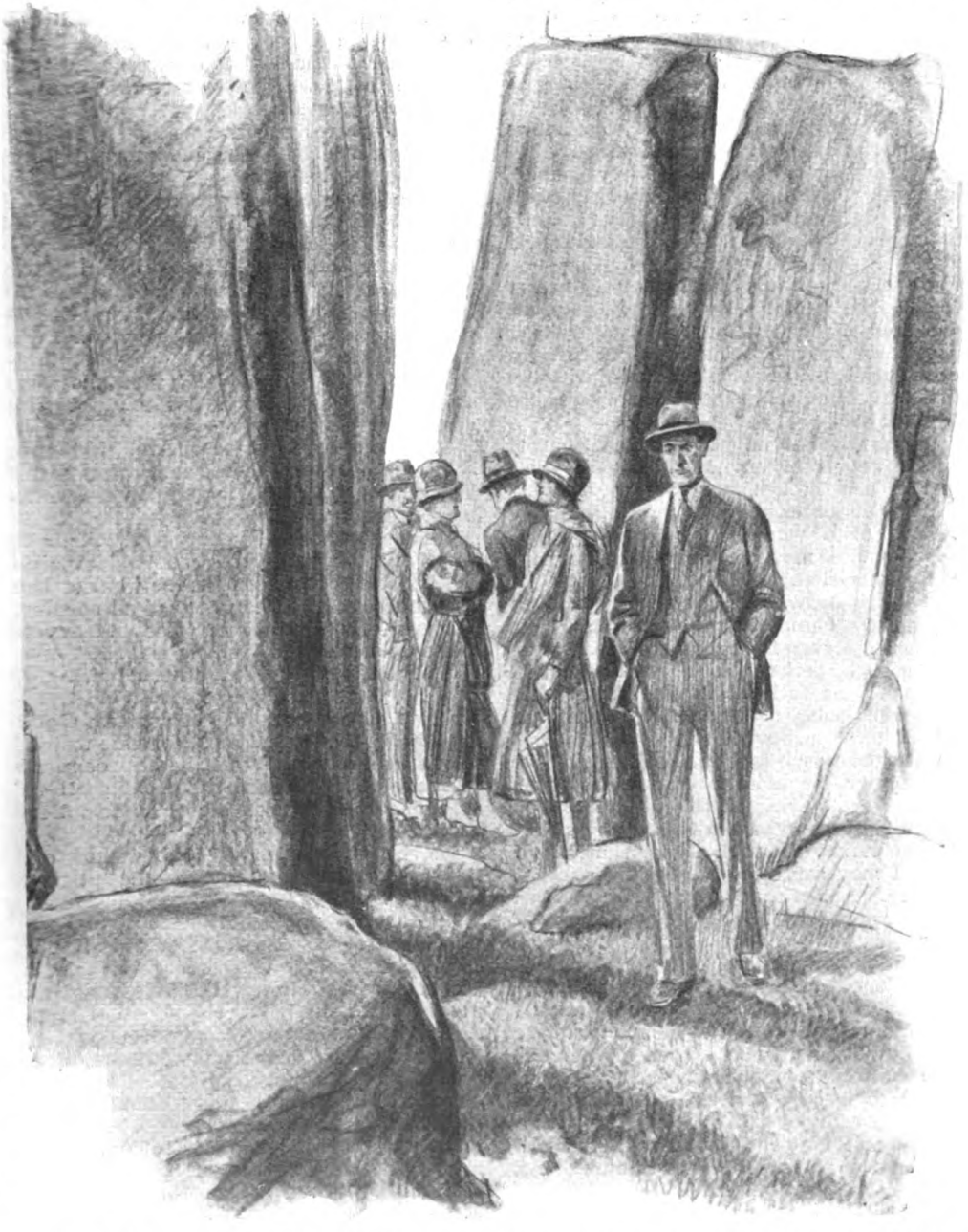
I turned round casually. Coming slowly towards us was the thin-lipped man who resembled Lakington.

He paused, and I glanced at him. His fingers had ceased filling his pipe, and he was standing absolutely motionless staring over my shoulder. Only for the briefest fraction of time did it last, and then he continued his interrupted sentence.

"Personally, I can't ever get any taste out of a cigarette."

As I say, the pause was only for a fraction of a second—a pause which I might quite easily have missed, had I not happened to have been watching his hands. But I hadn't missed it, and I knew that he had seen somebody or something behind me that had caused it.

"A match, at any rate, I can offer you," I said, and as I spoke I turned round casually. Coming slowly towards us was the thin-lipped man who resembled Lakington.



"Thanks," he answered, lighting his pipe in the unmistakable method of a man used to the wind. Then he handed me back the box.

"Well, good day to you," he said. "Maybe if you're staying in these parts we shall meet again."

He strolled off with the slight roll of the seaman, and I lit a cigarette. Certainly nothing he had done or said connected him in the slightest degree with the game, and yet I wasn't quite sure. Why that sudden pause in the middle of a sentence? And then it struck me that there was nothing to

connect the man who had caused it with the game either, except a resemblance to a dead criminal.

I SAT down on the ground, and proceeded to study the huge stone, acutely conscious that the thin-lipped man was standing just behind me.

"You are interested in this sort of thing?" he remarked, politely.

"As much as a bank clerk who knows nothing about it can be," I answered.

"It has always been a hobby of mine," he said. "The past is so infinitely more interesting than the present. One admits of imagination; the other is bare and brutal fact."

He talked on, and there was no denying that he could talk. His voice was pleasant and well modulated, and after a while I began to listen entranced. Evidently a widely travelled and well-read man, with the rare gift of imparting information, without becoming a bore.

It was when he happened to mention the Zimbabwe Ruins in Mashonaland—ruins that I had broken my journey at Fort Victoria in order to see; ruins, as many believe, of a vanished civilization, which had fascinated me at the time—that I became really interested.

He, too, knew them, and we started an argument. I maintained that they were an ancient legacy from some civilized people dating back, perhaps, to before the days of Solomon: he inclined to the theory that they were only the work of local natives, and at most mediæval.

"By the way," he said, affably, after we had chatted for another ten minutes or so, "if you are staying in this neighbourhood you might care to have a look at my collection of curios. Though I say it myself, I think I may say there are few finer in the country. And a man of taste like yourself would appreciate them."

"It is very good of you," I remarked. "Where is your house?"

He glanced at his watch thoughtfully.

"I have my car here," he said, "and if you can spare an hour I could run you over and show them to you. Then my car can take you back to your hotel."

"There is only one small difficulty," I said. "I came over from Amesbury with a gentleman I happened to meet at lunch. I see him over there—Professor Stanton. An enthusiast on butterflies."

"Professor Stanton!" he cried. "Not *the* Professor Stanton!"

"I really don't know," I murmured. "I met him quite by chance at lunch to-day."

"But," he exclaimed, excitedly, "if it's Professor John Stanton his reputation is world-wide."

"He's coming to join us," I remarked, "and you can ask him."

"But it is him," he cried, as Toby approached. "What stupendous luck! My dear Professor"—he advanced with outstretched hand—"you remember me. What a fool I was not to recognize you in Amesbury when I passed you!"

Sinclair stared at him blankly.

"I fear you have the advantage of me, sir," he remarked.

The other waved a deprecating hand.

"Ah! but, of course, you would not recall me. I am merely one of the thousands who have sat at your feet. It was presumption on my part to imagine that my face would be familiar to you. But how entranced I was at that lecture you gave on the habits of *Pieris Rapae*."

"You must be making some mistake, sir," said Toby, coldly. "I am not the gentleman you think."

"Modesty, Professor—modesty. Tell me, have you discovered a specimen of it yet? You told us, if you remember, that it was to be your life work."

"Though you are making a mistake, sir, as to my identity—yet I can well imagine that it would have been the life work of the man I resemble. The rarest of all species, perhaps. But I have seen to-day a marvellous specimen of the *Opsiphanes syme*."

"Stupendous!" said the other, admiringly. "What wonderful eyesight! Well, I mustn't detain a public character. Good day, sir, good day. And if you care to join your friend in a little visit he has promised to make to my humble abode, I shall be delighted to show you my amateur collection."

He bowed courteously and walked off, leaving Sinclair and me staring at one another.

"I say, old boy," said Sinclair, "I hope this is all right. I wonder who Professor Stanton really is? Hugh's made a bit of a bloomer there. He oughtn't to have given me the name of a pukka character. I must consult my list of names again."

And it was as he was pulling it out of his pocket that a strange noise close by drew our attention. It appeared to come from a little man of astonishing aspect, whose false teeth were clicking together in his excitement. He also seemed to be trying to speak.

"Are you acting for the films?" he spluttered at length. "Or are you being more stupid than you look for some purpose?"

"Explain yourself, little man," said Toby, with interest.

"Lying, sir—lying offensively on a sub-

ject which is sacred to some of us." His teeth nearly fell out, but he pushed them back with the care of long practice. "Using words, sir, which betray you as an impostor. How, sir, did you see a specimen of *Opsiphanes syme?*"

"With the jolly old peepers, laddie," said Toby, soothingly.

"Bah!" cried the little man. "Are you so profoundly ignorant of the subject you desecrate that you do not know that only in the swamps of Brazil is that beautiful butterfly found?"

"No wonder he said my eyesight was good," said Toby, thoughtfully.

"And further, sir—do you see that?"

He pointed a shaking finger at two Cabbage Whites chasing one another near by.

"The rarest of all the species, you called them. *Pieris Rapae*, sir. Bah! you make me sick. You should be prosecuted, sir; you should be prosecuted."

"Look here, you'll swallow your teeth in a minute," said Toby, but the astounding little creature had already departed, waving his fists in the air.

"Takes all sorts to make a world, gents," came a laughing voice from behind us. "But you do certainly seem to have said the wrong thing."

We swung round; the man who looked like a sailor was standing there.

"Don't you know anything about butterflies—or is he talking through his hat?"

He gave Toby a penetrating stare.

"Dangerous thing, sir, pretending to know more than you do. Or be what you ain't."

He strolled away, and once again we looked at one another.

"He's one of 'em," I said. "For a certainty. That's torn it."

"It has!" he remarked. "Absolutely torn it. What about Lakington the second? Is he one, too?"

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH I WRITE MY MIND TO DRUMMOND.

TOBY SINCLAIR was thoroughly despondent.

"I looked up a bunch of Latin names in an Encyclopædia," he said, morosely. "How the dickens was I to know that the darned thing only lived in Brazil?"

We were sitting in his room at the hotel.

"And the devil of it is, Dixon," he went on, "that even if Lakington the second is not one of them we've still given the show away to that sailor bloke. You could see his suspicions sticking out a yard."

"Hold hard a moment," I said. "You say we've given it away."

"What are you driving at?" He looked at me curiously.

"Simply this. Up to date I have not given myself away—either to the sailor or to the man you call Lakington. I think I may say that I have been the bank clerk on holiday to the life."

"Yes—but they know you know me," he objected.

"Now—yes," I agreed. "But the fact that I went to Stonehenge with you throws no suspicion on me. I didn't know it then."

"I'm hanged if I get you," he said.

"My dear fellow—you must clear out. If we're to do any good, and help Drummond in any way, it's impossible that you should stay on. They know you're an impostor; they know I know you're an impostor. Well, how can we both stop on here?"

"I suppose you're right," he agreed, reluctantly. "Well—what do you suggest?"

"That you tell them downstairs that you've changed your mind and will not require your room. Then you hop it. I shall stay on, and without being blatant about it, I shall drop an occasional remark about your extraordinary idea of a holiday. I am just an ordinary bank clerk taken in by you, as anyone else might have been."

He grunted and rose to his feet.

"You're right. I'll go. Drop a note to Hugh explaining things—and tell him I'm eating mud."

"It's bad luck," I said, "but I'm sure it's the only thing to do. Look out into the passage and see if there's anyone about. Then I'll make a bolt for it."

He opened his door, and gave me the all clear. And a few moments later I strolled into the bar. A little to my surprise, the seafaring man was there, seated in a corner. He was talking earnestly to someone, and as I saw who his companion was, my pulse beat a little quicker. It was our friend of the Mere, the man with the damaged hand. Proof—absolute and definite.

I ordered a pint of ale and sat down near them. And the instant he saw me the sailor leaned across and beckoned me to join them.

"Draw up, mate," he cried. "You know it's none o' my business, but what was your friend's great idea this afternoon? I've just been telling this gentleman about it. Your butterfly pal, I mean, who knew nothing about butterflies."

"I assure you," I said a little stiffly, "he's no friend of mine. He's the most casual acquaintance. He happened to be lunching late at the same time as I was, and suggested we should go to Stonehenge together."

"Can't understand it," said the sailor man. "Now, if one of you started to talk to me about seafaring matters, I guess I'd spot in two shakes how much you know about the sea."

"I think the explanation is very simple," I remarked. "It's merely a peculiar form of conceit. That man probably knows a smattering about butterflies, and for some reason or other likes to pose as an expert. He got it in the neck all right from that little man with the false teeth."

The sailor slapped his thigh with a blow like a pistol-shot and roared with laughter.

"Got it in the neck! Not half he didn't. Well, it will teach him a lesson. Look out—here he is."

Toby Sinclair came fussing in, and crossed to our table.

"Ah! Mr. Seymour," he said, "our little trip to-morrow must be cancelled, I fear. I have been unexpectedly called back to London, to my annoyance."

"I am sorry to hear that—er—Professor," I said a little stiffly.

"Going to catch *Opsi*—whatever it was—in Trafalgar Square," chuckled the sailor.

"I quite fail to understand you, sir," said Toby, drawing himself up. "Well—good-bye." He turned to me and held out his hand. "I trust you will enjoy the remainder of your holiday."

"You never can tell," said the sailor, darkly. "It may be that you're well clear of him, mate. Blokes don't masquerade like that unless they've got to. And they haven't got to unless there's something wrong somewhere."

"I quite agree," said the man with the damaged finger, speaking for the first time. "And as I happen to be a member of the police, I think I'll just keep an eye on the gentleman."

He finished his drink and left the room, and the sailor whistled under his breath.

"I wonder what the bloke has done?" he said. "Or whether it's what you said—just a form of conceit. Anyway—have another."

"I think I won't have another at the moment," I said. "I shall go out for a bit of a stroll. I'll go on up and get my hat."

"Right-ho, mate! You might see the Professor getting more butterflies."

I LEFT the bar and went upstairs to my room, then went down slowly into the lounge, half inclined to follow Toby and warn him that the man with the damaged thumb was on his trail. The sailor was still sitting in his corner of the bar.

"A note for you, sir."

The girl called to me out of the office.

"For me?" I said, staring at her.

She was holding it out, and I glanced at it. It was addressed to F. Seymour, and the unfamiliar name almost caught me napping.

Who on earth could it be from? No one knew me: and then, of course, I got it. Toby had left it on his way out. I slit open the envelope, and for a moment I stared at the contents uncomprehendingly.

"Do not follow Toby.—H. D."

H. D. Drummond! but where was he? How on earth did he know I had intended to follow Toby? And even as I racked my brains for an answer, a thick-set man in plus-fours crossed the lounge and entered the bar. He had a short, clipped beard flecked with grey, and his hair was thinning a little over the temples.

With an immense feeling of relief I followed him. Thank Heaven he had arrived on the scene! Naturally I was not going to pretend to know him, but I couldn't resist throwing him a casual glance as I passed. By the mere fact that I was there he would know that I had carried out his orders, so that it was unnecessary for me to do more. And I had the satisfaction of getting a quick look of approval.

"Changed your mind, mate, after all?" called out the sailor. "However, better late than never, and good beer tastes none the worse for the waiting."

"It looked so infernally hot in the street," I said.

And then it suddenly occurred to me that it would be a good thing to let Drummond know that this man I was talking to was one of the enemy.

"By the way," I said, casually, "seeing that you're a beer drinker, I suppose you're a Froth Blower."

The sailor shook his head.

"I've heard of it," he remarked. "But I ain't a member. What's the idea?"

"Well, they've got a sort of anthem," I said, conscious that Drummond was looking in our direction, "by which they recognize one another. It goes something like this"

"Great Scott!" said the sailor, after I'd finished.

"It should under certain circumstances be sung twice," I remarked. "This is one of them."

"I'll take your word for it," he said, urgently. "I don't want to be rude, guv'nor, but your voice is one of them things when a little goes a long way. Have another gargle?"

I declined his offer, and a little later I made my way into the lounge. Drummond had left the hotel, and it was fairly obvious that the only interest that the seafaring gentleman could have in me was one of curiosity.

The saving point in the situation up to date had been—though I said it myself—my own acting. And as I sat in the lounge, idly scanning a local paper, I confess I felt a little amused. Drummond's absolute assurance that we should not recognize him struck me as being distinctly funny. Seldom had I seen a more obvious disguise than the one he had adopted.

It surprised me, I confess. In one way and another I had heard so much of his resource and daring that it seemed all the more amazing that he should be so crude. To do him justice, the results he had obtained with Sinclair and myself were extremely good. Why, then, did he fail so dismally over himself?

As for Drummond with his beard, a child would spot him at the other end of the street. Had not the sailor himself been suspicious the instant he saw him? And did it not prove, if further proof was necessary, that up to date I was entirely unsuspected? Otherwise would he have spoken as he did to me?

I crossed to a writing-table. Something must be done. He might be our leader and all that, but I failed to see the slightest reason why I should run a considerably increased risk of getting it in the neck.

" SURELY," I began, " it is nothing short of insane to come here with such a blatantly false beard on. The thing shrieks at one. The man who looks like a sailor, and who, as I told you by signal in the bar, is one of them, suspected you at once. I rode him off, of course—but if the woman should see you, you're done for. We all are. Would it not be wiser, in view especially of Sinclair's bad mistake this afternoon, for you to leave this thing in my hands for the moment? I am the only one who is unknown to the other side. I obeyed your instructions, and did not go after him when he left the hotel, but are you aware that he was followed *by the man whose finger you shot off?* What is going to happen if they catch him? Don't you see that the whole show is up? They will realize at once that none of us was drowned.

" Would it not, therefore, be better if, as I said before, you lie low for a bit? I will keep my eyes open, and find out what I can—notifying you at once of any developments. My principal hope lies in the sailor, and in the man with the damaged hand. The latter we *know* is one of them; the former I am equally certain is one also. Not, of course, absolutely so: but his whole demeanour at Stonehenge this afternoon was *most suspicious*. In fact, only the certainty of my perfect disguise prevents me from thinking that he was giving me the next clue. And if he was, it is Stornoway, in the island of Lewis.

" Then there is another man, about whom I think Sinclair wrote to you. He resembles, apparently, a man you killed some years ago called Lakington. We met him in the street here, before starting for Stonehenge; and we again met him at the Friar's Heel itself. I had a long talk with him first, and found him a most delightful and cultivated individual. In fact, I cannot believe that he is one of the enemy. Then Sinclair joined us, and committed his terrible gaff. He told him he had actually seen a butterfly which, as we subsequently gathered, only grows in Brazil! After Lakington the second had left us, an odd little man, who obviously knew what he was talking about, though he acted as if he wasn't all there, told Sinclair to his face that he was an impostor. And the sailor, *who was close by, heard.* Now do you see the danger we are in?

" Wherefore I beg of you lie low. Hide, if necessary, in whatever room you may have taken, and *wait for information from me.* You may rely implicitly on me; but please do not make my task any harder than it is already."

I addressed an envelope to John Bright, and called for a stamp. And it was while I was waiting for it to be brought that a trick of memory brought to my mind an incident in some detective story I had read years ago. A man had given himself away by leaving behind him a piece of blotting-paper which he had just used. And the blotting-paper, when held up to a looking-glass, revealed exactly what he had written.

So I took the blotting-paper, tore it into small pieces, and dropped them in the paper-basket.

" Bit extravagant, aren't you, mate? "

With a feeling of annoyance, I turned round in my chair. Standing by the door of the bar was the sailor, and with him was the man with the damaged hand. And they were both staring at me.

" A habit we clerks get into in a bank," I said. " Clean blotting-paper always after finishing a job."

" Is that so? " he remarked. " What a good idea! "

I rose and crossed to the front door—I had no wish to post the letter in the hotel. And it was as I was actually stepping on to the pavement that a sudden awful thought struck me. Supposing they suspected me—just supposing—what was to prevent them, as soon as I was gone, from getting the torn-up pieces out of the basket and fitting them together?

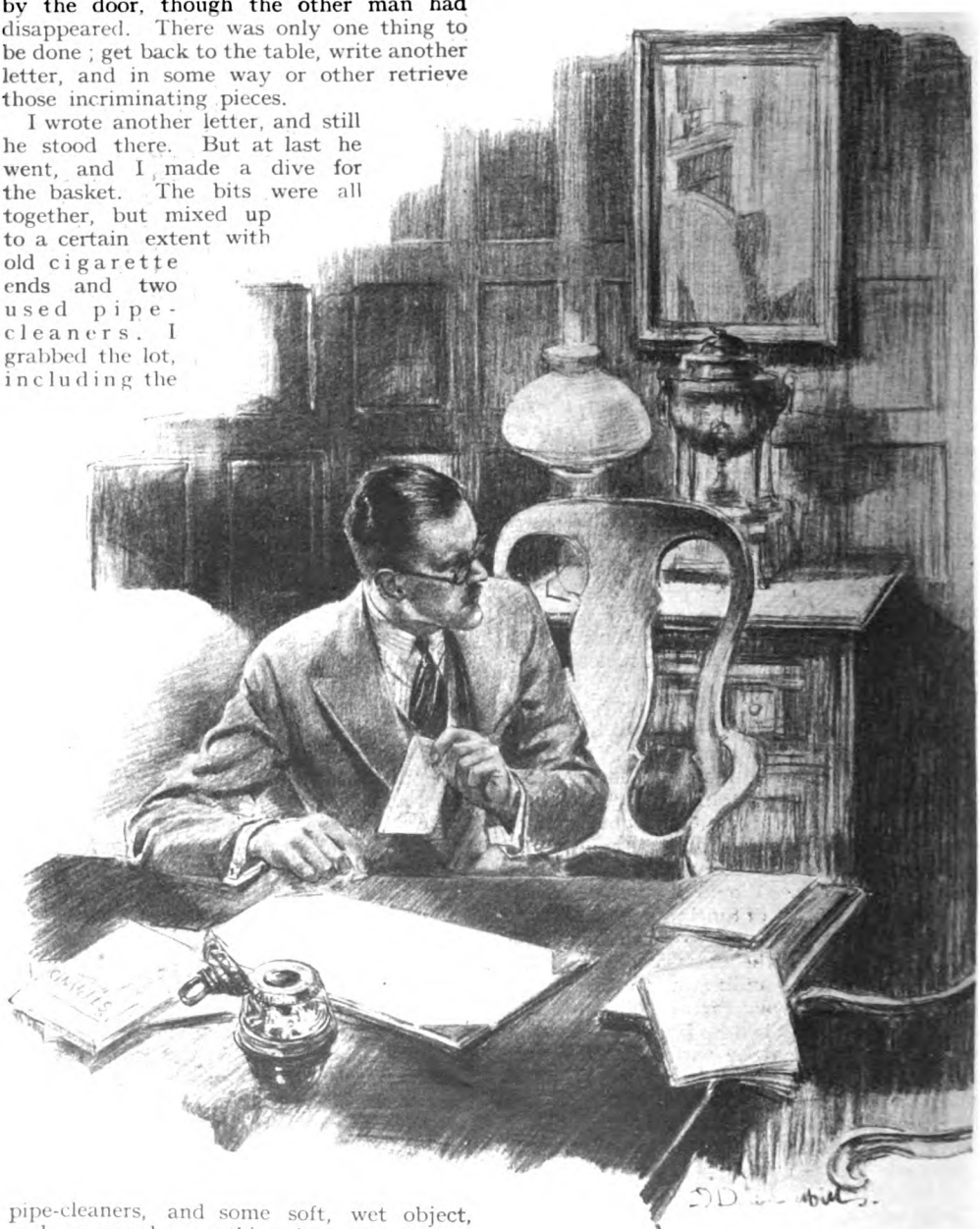
At all costs I must prevent that, and the

question was how. The sailor was still by the door, though the other man had disappeared. There was only one thing to be done; get back to the table, write another letter, and in some way or other retrieve those incriminating pieces.

I wrote another letter, and still he stood there. But at last he went, and I made a dive for the basket. The bits were all together, but mixed up to a certain extent with old cigarette ends and two used pipe-cleaners. I grabbed the lot, including the pipe-cleaners, and some soft, wet object, and crammed everything into my pocket. Then, breathing freely, I once more stood up, only to see that confounded sailor pop out again like a jack-in-the-box from the bar.

"Lumme, mate!" he cried, "what have you got on your coat? It looks like something out of a dust-bin."

I glanced down, just as the soft, wet object fell with a flop on the carpet.



I tore the blotting-paper into small mate?" Standing by the door was with the

"Why," he said, with interest, "that's the rotten plum I threw away an hour ago. You don't half have funny habits at your bank, old man, don't you?"

pieces. "Bit extravagant, aren't you, the sailor, and with him was the man damaged hand.

The situation was undeniably difficult, and the only thing to do was to carry it off lightly.

"I threw away an important paper by mistake," I laughed.

"Well, you must have had St. Vitus's dance in your fingers when you picked it up again," he said. "You've got an old boot-lace and two toothpicks on your coat, sticking in the plum juice."

He retired into the bar again, leaving me fuming inwardly. The man was absolutely ubiquitous; it seemed impossible to get rid of him.

However, I had retrieved the blotting-paper, which was the main point. The next item on the programme was to post my letter to Drummond.

I strolled along the street, thinking out the best means of tackling the problem. The whole thing boiled down to a question of subtlety and brain; of meeting cunning with cunning.

My eyes suddenly narrowed; surely there was Drummond himself—beard and all—going into the post-office.

He was leaning over the counter as I entered, and I went and stood next to him.

"Are there any letters here for Bright?" he asked the girl. "John Bright."

She turned round to look, and I nudged his arm gently, showing him at the same time the letter I held in my hand. Then I dropped it on the floor.

"One just come," said the girl, handing over Toby Sinclair's note.

Drummond took it, and then, as she attended to me, he stooped down and picked up mine. I bought some stamps, and stayed chatting with the girl for a few moments to give him time to get away. Then, with a feeling of relief that my warning had reached him safely, I followed at a reasonable distance. That vital matter was settled, anyway.

ONCE more I returned to the problem. Two main lines of action presented themselves, so it seemed to me. The first lay in shadowing the sailor or the man with the damaged finger, or possibly both: the second entailed a further visit or visits to the Friar's Heel.

The best course, I decided, would probably be a mixture of the two. I would cultivate the sailor's acquaintance, and if I kept my ears open I might learn something of value either from him or the man with the damaged hand. In addition I would pay a further visit to the Friar's Heel, and see if I could pick up anything there.

And that was the conclusion I had reached as I turned into the lounge. The sailor was in his usual corner of the bar, and he waved a cheerful hand at me as I entered.

"Been picking up any more plums?" he inquired. "Anyway, what about that gargle you wouldn't have before?"

"My shout this time," I said, genially, as I sat down. "Just been having a stroll through the town. What is it?"

"I believe," he said in a hoarse whisper, "that that man's beard is false."

"What man?" I asked, bewildered.

And then, to my rage and fury, I saw that Drummond had just entered the bar. After my urgent letter, after my imperative warning, for the triple distilled fool to parade himself again in the hotel of all places was too maddening.

"I don't think so," I managed to get out after a while. "Why should a man wear a false beard?"

"Why should a man pretend to know about butterflies when he doesn't?" he remarked. "Why should a man pick rotten plums and toothpicks out of a waste-paper basket?"

"I trust," I said, stiffly, "that you don't think there is anything mysterious about me."

"Lumme! no, mate," he laughed. "There ain't nothing mysterious about you."

He was staring covertly at Drummond all the time.

"It is false," he affirmed. "It waggles."

"Confound him and his beard," I cried. "Let's have that drink."

And even as I beckoned to the waiter, what little self-control that I still had after Drummond's colossal idiocy very nearly left me. Who should be crossing the lounge and heading straight for the bar but Algy Longworth?

He came drifting in, and I stared at him speechlessly. Had everybody gone mad, I wondered. That he should come here at all must be due to Drummond. And that Drummond should have sent him knowing that the man with the damaged hand was in the hotel could only be explained by the fact that our much-vaunted leader's brain had failed.

True they took no notice of one another, and after a time Longworth came over and sat down at the next table to ours. He, of course, did not know me, and I therefore judged it safe to address a casual remark to him.

"Motoring through?" I said, casually.

He nodded.

"Jolly place, isn't it?" he remarked. "I always love dear old Salisbury Plain, ever since I spent six months on it at the beginning of the War. But I don't know this end very well—I was up Ludgershall way. Is it far from here to Stonehenge?"

"Stonehenge?" repeated the sailor. "About three miles, I suppose. This gentleman and I were there this afternoon."

"I thought of going to-night," said Algy, and I felt I could have cheerfully murdered him.

"Did you?" remarked the sailor, staring at him thoughtfully. "Well, it's an interesting place, ain't it, mate?"

He turned to me.

"What did they call that stone where we were talking? The Friar's Heel, wasn't it?" And as he said it he deliberately raised his voice. I had a momentary glimpse of the man with the damaged hand standing in the door staring at Algy. Then he disappeared, and I saw him leave the hotel quickly. The damage was done: the message had been given.

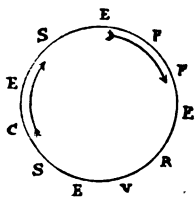
(To be continued.)

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

910.—AN EFFERVESCENT PUZZLE.

HERE is an entertaining little inquiry. In how many different ways can the letters in the word EFFERVESCES be arranged in a line without two E's ever appearing together? Of course, similar letters, such as F F, have no separate identity, so that to interchange them will make no difference. When the reader has done this he should try the case where the letters have to be arranged differently in a circle as shown with no two E's together. We are here, of course, only concerned with the order of the letters and not with their positions on the circumference, and you must always read in a clock-wise direction, as indicated by the arrows.



911.—WATER MEASUREMENT.

A MAID was sent to the brook with two vessels that exactly measured seven pints and eleven pints respectively. She had to bring back exactly two pints of water. What is the smallest possible number of transactions necessary? A "transaction" is filling a vessel or emptying it or pouring from one vessel to another.

912.—CREMATED ANIMALS.

THIS is a new form of buried words suggested by a correspondent (C. C.). Under "animal" I include birds, fishes, insects, etc., and I call them "cremated" because they are not buried whole, as in the ordinary way, but first disintegrated. Here are two examples:—

"The sailor hat . . . . d cap." "I left my corn . . . the hotel."

The first word is "hare," which makes it read "hath a red cap." The second is "bat," which gives the reading "comb at the hotel."

Now fill in the other words.

(1) I sa . . . . lit in the piece of wood.
(2) Are you wearing the ca . . . ave you?
(3) We shall sing the first p . . . . . Sunday
(4) I will carry the child . . . . gage.
(5) Were there le . . . . any people?
(6) W . . . . . ressed that doll?
(7) Did you see that b . . . . . ror at the lion's cage?
(8) I will no . . . . ew the offer that I made.
(9) Do not ste . . . . our flower beds.
(10) It was only a fal . . . . arm.
(11) The dead man's g . . . . . one ever saw.
(12) We pre . . . . . ail business.
(13) Dress the garden with soot, as . . . . . a weed.
(14) Is not that poor cal . . . . n?
(15) I did not grow . . . . ly sighed.
(16) My daughter . . . . t to go to the seaside.
(17) Do not depend for safety on shutters an . . . . . s.
(18) He . . . . . ate and left in an hour.

The dots indicate the number of letters missing.

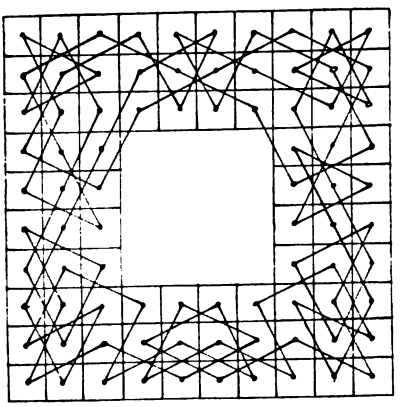
913.—SUMMING THE DIGITS.

WHAT is the sum of all the numbers that can be formed with the complete nine digits (0 excluded), using each digit once and once only in every number?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

905.—A FRAMED KNIGHT'S TOUR.

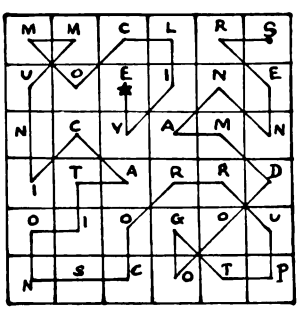
THE illustration explains itself. Starting wherever you like, the knight's moves indicated by the lines will take you to every square on the board and bring you back to the starting point.



906.—A DIGITAL PUZZLE.

IF you multiply 6666 by the sum of the four given digits you will get the correct answer. As 1, 2, 3, 4 sum to 10, then 6666 multiplied by 10 gives us 66660 as our answer. Taking all possible selections of four different digits the answer is 16798320, or 6666 × 2520.

907.—A HIDDEN PROVERB.



THE solution explains itself. Starting from the E at the star and following the lines the letters spell "EVIL COMMUNICATIONS CORRUPT GOOD MANNERS."

908.—A LEAP YEAR PUZZLE.

SINCE the new style was adopted in England in 1752 the first year with five Wednesdays in February was 1764. Then 1792 and 1804. By adding 28 we then get 1832, 1860, 1888. Then we make the jump to 1928, 1956, 1984, and 2012. The answer is, therefore, 1888 and 1956. Normally it occurs every 28th year, except that 1800 and 1900 (which were not leap years) come in between, when the rule breaks down. As 2000 will be a leap year, 28 years from 1984 is correctly 2012.

909.—FLOORING FIGURES.

THE only other answer appears to be:—

298 feet flooring boards @ 2d. .. £2 9s 8d

"I am one of those who have ATTEMPTED SUICIDE"

A Romance of Real Life

By

EVELYN HERBERT

WHEN I was nine years old I got a doll that was dressed by Caruso to represent him in the character he made famous in the opera "Pagliacci." The doll was offered at a bazaar in New York and my parents won it.

Caruso was my idol, for I always wanted to sing, and he was the greatest singer of his time.

With that doll came those extravagant dreams which even little girls of nine have, and I sent a letter to Caruso saying I was writing to him because I had won his doll and thought he might want to hear me sing.

Kind-hearted, generous, ever-boyish Caruso did not laugh at this childish note and throw it under the table. Instead he replied very courteously that he would hear me sing any time I was in the neighbourhood of the hotel where he lived in New York.

In answer to this long-prayed-for invitation, I soon after found myself facing the tenor.

As I had never taken a music lesson, my preparations for this audition were as original as they were meagre. I was ready to sing two numbers: the "Soldiers' Chorus" from "Faust," and the love duet from the same opera.

Caruso was a little puzzled when my nine-year-old soprano went into the rousing male chorus; but when I began the duet in solo he stopped me; then he went over to the piano and joined me with the tenor part.

Without a smile or jest he sang the music, bearing me over the difficulties and landing me safely in the finale. Then he applauded and was kind enough to say that I had a voice that should be cultivated for operatic singing.

We went home joyful; but for the next seven years I still was unable to obtain tuition. Then Mrs. Miles, a daughter of George C. Boldt, the New York hotel owner, became interested in me through the influence of Caruso, and I was given two years' study.

At eighteen I appeared at an audition before Campanini, director of the Chicago Opera Company, and he at once gave me a year's contract.

I made my *début* as Mimi in "La Bohème" with Bonci, the Italian tenor, who then was second only to Caruso himself.

No more than a few months after this notable beginning, which was received more kindly than I had dared to hope, I suddenly found myself faced with calamity.

I was losing my voice!

After having achieved leading *rôles* with a famous operatic organization, after being praised by critics and applauded by the public, with every prospect of advancing to a pinnacle of ambition, and then to be thrown down with such brutal suddenness, and before I had really time to know what it was to be a *prima donna!*

The directors of an opera company give jealous attention to its singers. The day came when Herbert Johnson, the manager of the company, called me into his office

and, with that suave courtesy which is the especial gift of impresarios, informed me that a variety of circumstances had made it necessary for him to ask me whether I would accept smaller *rôles* for next season.

He knew what my answer would be before I had spoken. That was why he asked me. I could not accept the reduction. I could only refuse to sign a new contract on such conditions. Whereupon Mr. Johnson was sorry, and my connection with the Chicago Opera Company was at an end.

One gets accustomed to misfortune no less than one comes to regard success casually. I had steeled myself to this awful result of my first flight and went immediately to New York, where I intended to spend all my savings and all the energy and will I had to restore my voice.

In the next twelve months I went to about thirty voice teachers. You have met those afflicted with some chronic illness who seize upon every rumour of a cure and rush from one doctor to another. That's how I was. Whenever I was told of some teacher who specialized on correcting vocal faults, I at once went to him, stayed until I found he could not help me, and then ran to another who held out a promise.

I was like the frenzied victim of some wild fad; only in my case the fad meant my life, for both my life and my work were joined together. Teacher after teacher, specialist after specialist, a nightmare of hearings and courses of exercises—and all to no purpose. A year of heartbreaking work and search, and my voice grew steadily worse.

No longer did I have offers from producers.

I could not have done the rounds of so many vocal studios without the secret becoming public property. They all knew it; Evelyn Herbert had lost her voice. Evelyn Herbert, who had reached the top, had lost her voice and become a nobody.

I had spent all my money and I did not know what to do. I had heard how friends desert one when money is gone. But, like the murder cases and accidents you read of in the papers, such experiences had seemed so remote from me that I could look upon them with complete detachment. But I knew now what they meant.

I knew what it was to be alone, with the telephone in my room ringing only at long intervals. And I knew fully what the shallowness of most of one's acquaintances meant when I met a girl friend one noon on Broadway and asked her to have lunch with me. She said she had already eaten.

A half-hour later, by an ironic chance,

I saw her in the restaurant I had gone to, dining alone. She had been afraid to go with me lest she should have to pay for my lunch, knowing what my circumstances were.

It seemed as if the bottom had dropped out of everything for me; the whole structure of my career had collapsed so completely that I saw no way by which it could be restored.

JUST as things were at their darkest, I received an invitation from some old friends who were summering in the Thousand Islands. They still remembered me with enough sympathy to wish to cheer me up. They begged me to spend a few weeks with them and take my mind off my worries.

There was nothing in particular that I could do in the city and I decided to go, although I was in no mood for holidays. I arrived at this beautiful resort, and my friends did all they could to make the days pleasant for me, but I was too despondent. I was continually tortured by the thought that I had lost my voice and my career had ended.

I could not sleep well at night, and one morning I grew weary of tossing about and rose about six o'clock. I dressed and went out for a walk. It was a dreary day, with a cold drizzle. I walked through the garden, and the dismal weather harmonized wholly with my mood.

As I was walking along the banks of the St. Lawrence, suddenly the hopelessness of my position and the futility of battling against it came upon me with an overwhelming effect. I seemed to see, with a new and grimmer finality, that all was at an end and I had nothing to live for. Then why live?

The water was at my feet. A courage that I had never known before possessed me. "Why not?" were the last words that I remember running through my brain. Then I jumped.

There was a confusion of water, of rushing sounds drumming against my ears, of a wild choking, of hysterical, desperate contortions of my arms, legs, and body, of fragments of incoherent thoughts, of an enormous vision of fighting against walls of yielding but crushing substance on every side.

Then this confusion resolved itself abruptly into a calm. I opened my eyes and found myself lying on the bank with a man bending anxiously over me.

I looked at him without understanding. I did not know what had happened or where I was. I forced my brain to think; literally squeezed it, as one does on awakening from a nightmare, to get at coherent consciousness. Slowly this came. Portions of thoughts fell together like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, and I understood.

The man was a gardener, a stolid workman of about fifty. I smiled as I lay there on the wet grass. The idea occurred to me that even here I had no luck. It wasn't a handsome hero who fished me out, but an elderly labourer. The attempted suicide, besides being a failure, was absolutely without romance.

I pause here to review what would have happened had that gardener not been on the spot when I jumped into the river. I would have been drowned. There would have been sorrow from a few relatives and friends. The newspapers would have carried half a column and a picture. Those who knew me or had heard of me would have shaken their heads and launched into a zestful discussion about me.

Herbert Johnson would have taken a few minutes from his work, leaned back in his chair, and reflected upon the troubles of life. And in the cemetery there would have been a fresh grave, topped by a stone pathetically dedicated to a young woman who had been cut off in the bloom of her years. Within a short time Evelyn Herbert would have been the vaguest of memories.

But see what happened after I was given my life back.

I will pass over the events that took place when I was taken back to the house. My thoughts and feelings were more or less of a blank. I felt I ought to be ashamed, embarrassed; but the "accident," as it was kindly termed, had the effect of drugging me against the more acute feelings. Throughout this semi-haze I had the one idea, that seemed like an anchor to me, that I must go back to New York and once more take up the fight. That was the strongest thought I was conscious of. I left the Thousand Islands as soon as I could and returned to New York.

A few days later my telephone rang and this conversation followed:—

"Is this Miss Herbert?"

"Yes."

"This is Miss ——. I am a theatrical agent."

"Yes?"

"Miss Herbert, I want to recommend a teacher who can restore your voice."

"How do you know I need such a teacher?" I said, dully, still hanging on to a shred of professional dignity.

"Oh, everyone knows that," the woman answered impatiently. "Everyone knows you've lost your voice. I want to tell you that this teacher can help you."

I went to this teacher. My voice im-

Miss Evelyn Herbert.

proved from week to week. I was still practically penniless, but I did not care. I was gay and happy. My voice was coming back!

I applied for a job in the chorus of "Honeydew," a Broadway musical comedy that was about to open, and got it—at forty dollars a week. From a *prima donna* with the Chicago Opera Company to the chorus of a musical show! And all within a bare two years!

But the drama of this sequence never troubled me. I sang in the chorus and danced my steps. Being away from home, I half-starved through the days. But I did not care. My voice was coming back!

Then I went to "Roxy"—S. L. Rothafel, the famous director of big "movie" houses —and he put me in his "gang," that first gang that became so popular in the early days of radio broadcasting. I was with Roxy for a year and a half, and amplified my income from this job by another one in the chorus of the Fred Stone show, "Stepping Stones."

By this time my voice was so improved that the Shuberts gave me the *ingénue* part in "The Love Song." Then I was put in the lead of "Princess Flavia," after nine other Flavias had been tried out. This was followed by the main *rôle* of the operetta "My Maryland."

I now have my voice back. I can again look forward to a future and to a realization of my old ambitions.

As to what the matter was with my voice I am not quite clear. Those delicate cords in the throat had been strained and had revolted.

As I look back upon my terrible experience, I cannot help but see the truth in a philosophy that has become very trite to a modern, sophisticated intelligence, a philosophy that hangs on that hackneyed old phrase, "While there's life there's hope."

I lived, and everything righted itself, as lives generally do. One year you are overwhelmed by troubles, the next year they have somehow disappeared. Life is a sturdy thing; it has tremendous natural resistance to misfortune. When life is given leave to take its course, it will generally find its proper balance.

Each in his own humble way learns his lessons in living. I have been taught the folly and futility of yielding to despair. And if I can pass on what I have learned to others, I shall consider that the publication of this unhappy experience has been justified.

In the glass, as he spoke, Louis saw the white face of a man in hiding, eyes oddly wide open—himself.

WHAT CAN A DEAD MAN DO?

By

HERBERT SHAW

Illustrated by
S. ABBEY

JAMES FRENSHAM dined alone. Considering that he was a ruined man, he ate an admirable dinner. It was less surprising that he allowed himself a third glass of the '75 brandy which, during the bright years of Frensham's astounding success, an army of generous guests had nobly praised. To-night, scattered about London, they waited for the crash as men wait for an expected, a certain clap of thunder. Some of them, who had really liked Jimmy Frensham, felt a little awe.

Louis Strang felt only pleasure.

James Frensham drank alone. He chatted for a moment with his butler. The man's wife was ailing, and Frensham was glad to hear that she was better. He remarked that that sort of thing meant a lot of expense, found a fifty-pound note in his case, and insisted that Harris should accept it. Harris and his employer liked each other very much, and the man was so surprised and delighted that it was difficult for him to speak. Frensham had to stare hard at the brandy in the big glass, and his eyelids felt unsteady. He said :—

" The next time Dainty Dancer runs over

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six furlongs, Harris, don't forget to back her. She's the best three-year-old I've ever had."

Harris had pleasant memories.

"You've had some good ones, too, sir. Shall you be going out?"

"Only round the square. It's still fine, isn't it? Oh, Harris, I've mislaid my fountain-pen somewhere in the house."

Harris promised to find it. Jimmy Frensham, big and smiling, took his cigar into the study, and for ten minutes considered things from the point of view of a man whose notes were going about the City at forty per cent. discount and no takers. Settling day was just over the edge of to-morrow. You couldn't alter that. There can only be one winner—another unalterable fact.

Louis Strang, who had hated him for ten years; Louis Strang, who could fairly be described as a dirty little squirt, had beaten him at last. The worst annoyance was that Frensham had been unaware, till six months back, of the bitterness and strength of Strang's enmity. Strang, born in South Africa of a Dutch mother, dark and small and sallow, had successfully kept his place as an admirer of Frensham's spectacular daring, as a friend. Ostensibly together, they had gone into that ambitious scheme known as Imperial Supplies, to buy for control and a rising market. But Strang and his crowd, knowing more than Frensham, had sold and sold, under a score of disguises in the way of fancy names. The very money-lenders Frensham had been forced, as time went on, to approach and use had been the puppets of Strang and his associates, additional instruments in the squeeze.

Jimmy Frensham thought how easily his two great hands could lift slender little Louis, caress him for much less than a minute, and drop him dead and ugly; and then Harris brought him the missing fountain-pen. The thought of the man's sick wife returned to Frensham, and he felt a sudden tremendous elation because he was a bachelor. He pulled open one of the small drawers of the bureau.

"I'm getting careless. Could you find me a stamp? And I'll have some coffee to-night, I think."

Harris hesitated, and Jimmy Frensham laughed. "I'll have coffee all the same. Doctors don't know everything, Harris."

And he thought: "Nor Harris either. Nor James Frensham, for that matter. I'm going to enjoy that coffee. And I'll get him to bring in the brandy—I don't see why I shouldn't."

He did enjoy the coffee. He gave himself five minutes with the evening paper, and he enjoyed that also, for he was tolerant and happy, except when he thought of Louis Strang. He figured himself standing in the wings, unseen, and watching with amusement the colourful play of the world he knew. There was a surprise for him in the news. The paper featured a portrait of Lady Alison Fortess, and the exclusive announcement of her engagement to Mr. Louis Strang, the millionaire financier. Frensham laughed without resentment.

"Why, that's Worthing's daughter," he said to himself. "The little dago's climbing high. Top of the tree!"

He went out into the quiet of King's Square, and loved the blue gentleness of the summer night. It was half-past nine. The last collection from the pillar-box at the farther corner was at five minutes past ten. The driver of a cruising taxi, seeing the big man without a coat, bareheaded, and in evening clothes, summarized him as a regular toff, and was proud of the London that brought him his daily bread.

At twenty minutes to ten Harris heard Jimmy Frensham return. Jimmy Frensham, unlocking another drawer of the bureau, said cheerfully to himself, "I'd like to have another smack at Master Louis"; but that is not in evidence. At a quarter to ten Harris heard the shot, and dashed upstairs to the study. Jimmy Frensham was dead, and Harris saw that he was smiling, and cried like a baby. The jungle never displays a dead heat. There can only be one winner.

LOUIS STRANG was dancing at the Cardinal when he got the news. He came back from the telephone. He was a wonderful dancer; it was his dancing Lady Alison had first adored about him, and, after that, she had discovered romance in his rise from obscurity, in his sleek movements, in the smooth, unwavering passion of his dark eyes. With all this, she kept her pride, high and cold. Louis worshipped her beauty and herself. With what imagination he had, he saw himself as a humble pilgrim, for whom the gates of the temple on the mountain-top were suddenly flung open without demur. Lady Alison was the symbol of his marvellous success. What a triumph!

"Poor Jimmy Frensham's shot himself," he whispered to the man who was having supper with him, and Rogers set his cigar at a steep angle and laughed. Rogers had been on the right side in the battle with Imperial Supplies.

"Cut that out, Louis," he sneered. "The sob stuff doesn't go. You mean that you and I and the rest of the crowd have bumped Jimmy Frensham off where he can't do any harm. And you didn't mind what dirty tricks you used to do it, either. It's a good

job for you that your swell Lady Alison doesn't understand business. She——"

"I don't want any mention of Lady Alison from you," flamed Louis, but Rogers was unruffled.

"It doesn't interest me much," he retorted. "I'm saying that Jimmy always scared you to death, and that you'd never have stood up to him in a ring even if he had a hand tied behind his back. He's out, and we've cleared half a million, but he was something you'll never be—a good fellow and a fair fighter! It's worth another bottle of Roederer. Call the waiter."

"I wasn't afraid of him," declared Louis, but he had to think before he said it.

"Oh, no," said Rogers, indifferently. "I'm sorry you're upset by the news. That's what I meant to say. You needn't be afraid of him any more, need you?"

And the thought that he need no longer be afraid of Frensham was indeed the laurel of victory. It rested Strang's little soul as he sipped his wine. It was good for him that he welcomed and gave thanks for his peace at that moment. It was good for him that he slept well that night. He was to know little sleep in the days ahead of him.

"When's your wedding?"

"Inside a month from now," Strang told him, happily.

Rogers grunted. "I'd like to know what you're paying old Worthing. Well, now I'll be able to buy you something worth while, Louis. It's a pity you've got a Rolls already. Where are you going to live? Portland Place, or just Heaven—till she finds you out?"

Strang hated him.

ON the next morning, Friday, Strang's sense of pleasure was still bright and keen. Then, among the letters they brought to his bedroom he saw the handwriting of Jimmy Frensham, and felt sick. Damn him! It wasn't good manners of the fellow to worry him now.

He put it aside. He took up the other letters. Jimmy Frensham's handwriting stared at him from the quilt, so he turned the letter over, and had an odd feeling of being wise and clever. Why couldn't he open the other letters and read them? He made a snatch at the letter and tore open the envelope, hot and resentful because of the absurd notion that something was making him do this against his will.

What on earth could Jimmy have to write to him about, in that thin scrawl which had always seemed such a curious contradiction of his open and generous personality? Strang had already, to feed his pleasure, looked at the newspapers and read Harris's story. Frensham had gone to post a letter, he thought. And here it was. It must be the last thing Jimmy Frensham had written.

There wasn't much of it.

"I am desperate. I have made up my mind to see you again. I will come and see you next Thursday evening at Hanover Place, exactly at ten. Wait for me.

"JIMMY."

Louis rang the bell. When his man came, he held out the blue envelope.

"Are you sure that this letter was delivered here this morning?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"There's no chance of its having been in the flat some time—overlooked in some way, is there?"

"None at all, sir. I remember seeing it with the others this morning, when I unlocked the letter-box." The man was plainly bewildered. "Wouldn't the postmark tell you, sir?"

Louis sweated. What a fool he was! In the shock of his first thought it had never occurred to him to examine the postmark. He was betraying the fear that already had begun to destroy him. The man was staring at him. Louis was holding out the letter. He snatched it back, and fumbled with a lie to excuse his inquiry.

"I couldn't quite make it out." Now, holding the letter close to his eyes, he murmured: "I can see it now. It's quite all right, thanks. It was posted last evening. Thanks."

The door shut. Louis Strang, drawing in his breath, shivered. It was a fine morning. Into the sunniest room of the big flat in Hanover Place he imagined a darkness creeping, a darkness slow and cold.

Let's see, what did Harris say? Mr. Frensham wanted his fountain-pen. Mr. Frensham asked him for a stamp. (At the time he made these requests, Louis Strang reflected, Frensham must already have made up his mind to do away with himself. He wanted these things, reasoned Louis, in a slow and child-like way, to write a letter. This letter.) Mr. Frensham went out at half-past nine. Harris heard Mr. Frensham return at twenty to ten. At fifteen minutes to ten Harris heard the shot that signalled full stop for Jimmy Frensham.

Jimmy Frensham's purpose in leaving the house had been to post this letter—this letter that was half a threat, half a command. "Wait for me——"

Strang slipped out of bed and locked the door. It wouldn't do for anybody else to see this letter. As he put on a dressing-gown his eyes were still fixed on the blue envelope, the blue letter; and both letter and envelope seemed alive and menacing.

It meant a bit of courage to reach out for the envelope, to verify the postmark with the time of collection, 10.5. Somebody in the sunlit room, in a voice exasperated and angry, said suddenly: "*Stop now!*" and Louis started. It was a second before he realized that he was talking aloud.

The thought that Frensham might have written the letter earlier in the day was responsible for Strang's exclamation.

Jimmy Frensham laughed. "I'll have coffee all the same. Doctors don't know everything, Harris."

Suppose Frensham had meditated a last appeal to his enemy, and that the posting of the letter had been delayed by a careless servant. Strang theorized unhopefully on this chance, and then rejected it. It didn't hold. Jimmy Frensham would have telephoned any such appeal. Or he would have dispatched it by a special messenger. He would have done neither, concluded Strang; he wouldn't have written a word. Jimmy Frensham always went straight at things. He would have come round to Hanover

Place himself, big and confident, unflurried though they had driven him to the very edge.

And he still said he was coming—exactly at ten—though the last of him lay quiet in a room of the house in King's Square. On Thursday next. Exactly at ten. He was the loser, but he was the big fellow still. There wasn't a doubt now in Strang's mind about the last message from his enemy. We said a man was dead, and that was only a word, and what more did we know about it? What had any of us known, from the far time when the first man, the very first man, died? Already Louis shrank within himself, already the fear of big Jimmy Frensham, the fear that had prompted all Strang's lies and hate and knavery, was a grey mist upon his mind.

Already Louis Strang expected him.

What nonsense! Louis pulled himself together. He reminded his quaking soul that men were mad when they killed themselves. They weren't like the fortunate people they left behind—the winners. They were already children of the darkness they were about to enter. They did mad things—and wrote them—for a last glimmer of satisfaction, of crazy pride, of spite.

But Jimmy Frensham, who used to boast that he never missed an appointment, had never been spiteful or mean.

THE telephone rang, and loud-voiced Rogers spoke.

"How are you, Louis?"

"Fine, thanks." In the glass, as he spoke, Louis saw the white face of a man in hiding, eyes oddly wide open—himself. It was distressing and unfamiliar.

"That's good. I feel like nothing this morning. Couldn't sleep."

"Why, what's the matter? You were fit enough last night."

"Too much bubbly, I expect, in that gilded pothouse of yours. Kept on dreaming. That's why I rang up—I had to tell you. By gum, I can laugh at it this bright morning, but not then, Louis!"

He heard Rogers's laugh, noisy and brutal.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Rogers."

"I'm telling you, aren't I? I had no end of a fright. I woke up with a start, and I could have sworn that Jimmy Frensham was there in the room. I even thought I *saw* him!"

"What!" Louis choked over the cry.

"I can't hear you. I must have been dreaming, of course, but it didn't seem like dreaming a bit. I believed, even, that I heard him talking, but that don't matter."

Louis almost screamed, "Yes, it does matter. What did he *say?*"

"What are you moaning about?" demanded the astonished Rogers. "I thought I'd leave that out—it was only a dream, you idiot. He said, 'You tell that lying little cad Strang I'll be seeing him again soon. Very soon. And he'll be sorry.' Then I woke up, all hot and bothered. I was dam' glad, I'm telling you. Eh?"

Louis Strang was looking foolishly at the stranger in the glass.

"Eh? You there, Louis?"

"Yes."

"Funny, wasn't it? I've never had a dream that seemed more solid and straight. Real, like. So dashed real that I thought you'd like to know about it. It wouldn't have taken much to make me run out of the room. Or to touch him. It was that real. I can't persuade myself now that I didn't really hear him talking. What did you say?"

"Nothing!"

"Of course, the rummest part of it is that Jimmy was nuts on spiritualism this last year or so. Used to go in for the whole doings—table-raps, manifestations—whatever you have from wherever he is, poor chap. Believed in it all ends up. Why, once——"

Something in Louis froze. "Are you sure?"

"I am," said Rogers. "He asked me to make one at his séances more than once. But it's not my line. Nor was last night's performance—by Christopher, no! Can you get to the Savoy later on, Louis? I'll be lunching there."

Louis excused himself. And then a sudden hope made light in his burdened mind. "What are you doing next Thursday, Rogers? It's time I had a day off. What about driving down to Bramshot and playing golf? Or start the day before, and get farther—Devon—Westward Ho?"

"No bon," Rogers told him. "I'm slipping over to Paris that day."

That was better still. That was farther from Hanover Place, wasn't it? So Louis cried urgently, "Mind if I come, Rogers?"

Rogers's laugh was very near a bellow. "No bon again," he guffawed. "Do you think I'm going to Paris *alone!* That's a good one, Louis. Well, I thought you'd like to hear about my dream of Jimmy. I'm all set for him if he turns up in a dream again. He won't scare me!"

"Nor me," Louis quavered.

"I should say not. I wouldn't be surprised if there was something in this spirits business—but what can a dead man *do?* Eh?"

"That's right. What can a dead man do?" Louis echoed, and rang off. But the bright room was lonely without the booming voice of Rogers, and terror entered into him.

Friday, wasn't it? He had to look at the paper to make sure. Friday, Saturday, Sunday . . . Thursday—seven days and six nights between now and ten o'clock on Thursday. This day and it's to-morrow, the next day and the day after, he was to think of little else but of Jimmy Frensham and his threat.

The Coroner said that Harris had given his evidence in a very straightforward manner. Mr. Frensham's doctor had testified that Frensham had been worried and anxious lately, different from his usual self. There was no need to call any other witnesses. It was, unfortunately, a perfectly plain case of a man with great talents who was also—and had been all his life—a great gambler. He had staked all he had on a last throw (while he was talking, the Coroner could plainly see that line in the newspapers), and he had failed. Well knowing that he could not meet his liabilities, he had taken this last and desperate step——

Louis Strang, drawn against his will to crowd into the public gallery at the inquest, went out, and making for his car, which he had purposely ordered to wait some distance away in a side street, suddenly imagined a surprising resemblance to Jimmy Frensham's back in a man who walked a few paces ahead of him. The man halted to look in a shop window, and Louis stopped dead. He noted the man's height and big shoulders, the same as Jimmy Frensham's. The grey suit and dark brown hat were such as Frensham mostly wore, and then it seemed to Louis that his own life stopped. In a dark and paralysing second of terror at its height, he recognized the black twisted walking-stick, with its curious knob, which Jimmy had been wont to carry. It must be Jimmy Frensham!

Louis turned and bolted, got a taxi and crawled into it. He huddled there, quivering, breathing hard. The man had driven him aimlessly for an hour before his fare found courage to go home.

He found several explanations of his encounter, but none of them satisfied. Fear captured him and all his thoughts, so that no effort of his brain had power to mitigate the slow hours of the hell now presented to him, the hell which possessed a frightening boundary of time—ten o'clock next Thursday. The hours were slow, yet the days—not the cruelly burdened nights—seemed to gallop towards that boundary with a shameful eagerness and haste.

ALONE at Hanover Place, he confessed again and again, half praying, that he had indeed wronged Jimmy Frensham grievously in his hatred, that he had employed many lies and meannesses beyond forgiveness during the long, treacherous fight that had ended in Frensham's ruin. Louis Strang, thus confessing, was willing to believe that God heard these prayers. But that did not comfort him. Would Jimmy Frensham hear them? Would Jimmy Frensham, knowing that he was truly sorry and a penitent, hear them and relent?

And he would stare again at the letter which he dared not show to a soul. He was the winner, he was a very rich man—odd that from all the host of men who had taken part in the crowded trafficking of his life there was none he could trust with this secret fear! Men he had got the better of, men who had bested him—out of them all not one!

Lady Alison? The big studio photograph of her looked at him; she was serene and steady-eyed, very far from all this turmoil of dread. Infinitely apart from the jungle of the market through which Louis had lied and clawed his way to success, his thought of her made her more desirable than ever.

He dared not go to her. She idealized him, he knew, and he could not lie to *her*; and without lying what explanation could he give? Meanness, unfaithfulness, and fear were against her code, and she abhorred them. Should she discover any of these in Louis, she would be lost to him. And Louis clung to the thought of her as to a sunny land.

He looked out into Hanover Place and saw the man in the grey suit whom he had believed to be Jimmy Frensham. Louis was always seeing him now, once getting on to a bus by the print shop in the Strand, once in Soho just as Louis was coming out of the Marquis after lunch, once outside Rule's, reading an evening paper he had just bought. He had never looked at Louis.

Suddenly it was Monday—almost, Louis Strang persuaded himself, before he had given any earnest consideration to the matter at all. An idea completed itself. He rang up the depot of Airways, Ltd.

"I want a 'plane next Thursday evening. I want to start at nine o'clock—not before—a night flight to Vienna. Can it be done? Thank you. I'll be there at nine."

Now he was a little happy; he even laughed. "Wait for me——," Jimmy Frensham had ordered him. It wasn't likely. Exactly at ten, out there in the high free skies, all cities and their nastiness as nothing, the tiny lights of them showing like lines of a quiet song, what could a dead man do?

THE girl in grey came to Hanover Place the next evening. Louis had dined at Verrey's, and she was waiting when he returned. Louis's servant gave him her card—*Miss J. Childs.* Louis would not have seen anybody; but written boldly across the card were the words, 'Late Secretary to Mr. James Frensham." Louis said, "Ask her in."

There was an urge in him to say at once, "Very likely you can tell me something," but when she stood there, in front of his table, her quietness made him feel cunning. He said :—

"What do you want?"

She looked puzzled. "Didn't your man tell you? He wouldn't hear of my waiting until I let him know my business. I told him that I was hoping you might find me something to do."

Louis was relieved. "Oh, you want a job, Miss Childs?"

"I shall do, soon." As she smiled, she looked very pretty. Louis thought also that he had never seen a girl so self-assured. In spite of the implication in her answer, one might have thought that a job was a matter of indifference to her.

"Sit down, Miss Childs. I'll see what I can do. How long did you work with Mr. Frensham?"

"Over three years." The visitor glanced at her wrist-watch, an expensive affair of platinum from the shop that looks over the little valley in Bond Street, and Louis thought: 'That thing cost all of thirty guineas. Jimmy Frensham must have paid her very well." In the second drawer down his right hand was touching Frensham's letter. In three years she must have known Frensham's moods, the way he looked at life and regarded other people. Why wasn't he getting forward? Hadn't he got to find out everything he could about Frensham?

"Miss Childs, did Frensham—were you with him on the day he shot himself?"

"No, Mr. Strang."

"I was terribly upset when I learnt what had happened. Did Frensham ever say anything about me?"

She looked at him for the first time. "Weren't you his friend?"

The man halted to look in a shop window—

and Louis stopped dead.

she asked. The coldness of her tone startled him.

"I was once." Confound the girl! Was he defending himself to her?—and if she took another glance at that watch he would tell her straight out about her manners. But now she was looking at him expectantly—that answer wouldn't do for her, then—he had to go on. "But we didn't see eye to eye about several things, and we quarrelled. Business is business."

"That's what Mr. Frensham used to say when he talked about you. He said that was written on your heart, that phrase, and he used to laugh, and say it was the world's mouldiest motto to go through life with, and he had a good mind to write and tell you so. But he never troubled. Why do you look so angry? You wanted to know, Mr. Strang."

She found a card in her bag, scribbled something, and got up. "That's my new address, Mr. Strang. Perhaps you'll let me know."

"Wait a minute, please," said Louis, quickly. "There's something I want to show you." He folded Frensham's letter so that the first line did not show. "It's a letter Frensham wrote me"—he resolved to lie—"several days before he died. There's—something strange about it, and I want to know if you think it's his usual writing. Of course, he must have been very worried about that time——"

His visitor nodded. "Do you mind if I take my hat off?" she asked. "It's terribly hot in here."

"Certainly," said Strang.

Then she came round and stood at his side. She bent down, studying what she could see of the letter, firmly held under Strang's fingers.

"It was written a week before," Strang lied. "An appointment for last Thursday, but he did not keep it. Now, do you think that's in Frensham's usual writing?"

His question was not answered. Miss Childs seemed astonished. "Last Thursday?" she echoed.

"Can't you see it properly?" Strang demanded, and switched on a desk lamp. "It's plain enough. Next Thursday, exactly at ten."

"That's not Thursday at all," declared Miss Childs, calmly. "It's Tuesday, and it's nearly ten now."

"What!" Strang demanded. "Do you mean to tell me that word isn't Thursday?"

"I *know* it isn't. It's Tuesday—to-day. Why, what's the matter?"

For all the colour had gone from Strang's face, and he felt himself sink in his chair, and a curious sensation of great cold

wrapped and numbed him. The familiar things of the pleasant room seemed ghostly. His plans for escape were two days late. If Jimmy Frensham kept his promise, the dreaded minute of his coming was almost here. Miss Childs heard him breathe. She was still bending over the letter. He felt her body light against his shoulder, was conscious of a faint perfume. She moved away from him and straightened. Strang mistook her action, and was desperately afraid.

"Don't go!" he implored her. "Don't go! Don't leave me alone!"

Then he cried: "What are you doing?" For she had taken up the letter, and was calmly unfolding it. Now she discovered something fresh. She stooped lower, holding the letter under the lamp.

"Look at that signature!" she exclaimed.

"It's his, plain enough, isn't it? *Jimmy?*"

"That's what it was meant to be. But look again. It's a bit more scrawling, even, than the rest. It could just as easily be *Jenny*, couldn't it, now? And my name's Jenny."

The discovery appeared to please her. Her smile bewildered him. Again Louis touched darkness, and felt lost. What made her go on babbling about the signature—what did it matter?

But Miss Childs persisted in reflecting over it. "That was an accident," she murmured. "I didn't have a thought of it—I never noticed it till this minute."

"What the devil do you mean?" Louis gasped. "You told me you weren't with Frensham that day. Have you seen that letter before? Give it to me!"

But Jenny Childs shook her head. With an amazement which brought a sharpening of his fear, he heard her laugh. The crowded room of his weary mind admitted a dim wonder whether she were mad. In this room of ghosts, one did not laugh.

But Miss Childs laughed. And she touched his shoulder.

She found she could release her arms, for Louis had moved away from her in consternation.

"Pull yourself together," she said. "Jimmy Frensham won't be coming."

"What do you know about that letter?"

"Everything. I wrote it—five minutes after I came home and found Jimmy dead. I meant to give you the worst fright I could—because you killed him, Mr. Strang. I'm Jimmy Frensham's niece—Jimmy was the best man God ever put breath into, and

you aren't fit to lick his boots. You see, I knew all about you, Mr. Strang. You had been a friend of his, and you didn't give him a chance. You just hunted him down, and you were glad he was dead. Weren't you ? "

Louis Strang said nothing. He had got to his feet, and he was looking at her.

Recovering, he slowly understood that she was speaking the truth, and that the slow agony of the past days was her creation. He was unconscious that his right arm was bent, but he knew, within him, an impulse to strike her.

Miss Childs moved to her hat. " I could imitate Jimmy's writing easily," she said. " I've done personal letters for him lots of times. Good-bye, Mr. Strang. Jimmy Frensham's brother will be waiting for me outside. You've met him."

" Damn you ! " Strang breathed, and still looked at her. Jenny Childs had championed Jimmy Frensham because he had been kind to her, and she adored him. He had been so big, so valiant, even when he was aware that Strang, and Strang's crowd, had smashed him to a finish. She had had her agony—to have seen him dead.

So, when Louis swore at her, she laughed again.

" I don't see why you should be violent about it, Mr. Strang. Jimmy was heaps bigger than any of you—and you've got all the money. You can't have everything."

" But," gulped Strang, " do you think I'm——"

She cut him short. " You deserved any bad time you've had, and you jolly well know you deserve it," she said, and she might have been pronouncing a judgment. " Good night, Mr. Strang."

And then Jenny Childs screamed. For a devil of the old days was suddenly in Louis Strang, from the old dark time before he had first tremblingly met Lady Alison and worshipped her as a star, with a worship that must shut the doors on all other women for ever, because Lady Alison, cold and serene and prideful, was the ultimate, was heaven. This girl Jenny had trampled his courage and his vanity, had made him so small that revenge, even the littlest and the meanest, was necessary to assuage his resentment and his pride. Louis Strang went back to type, to the snarling gutter of his early days.

He leapt at Jenny Childs and held her close, smiling and mumbling at the white fury of her face, at her efforts for release. So Jimmy Frensham was too big for him, eh ?—she had flung that in his face. Well, she might be right about that, but he had always been able to get along with women. She strove to get her bruised arms free, and Louis thought, " Let her struggle. She'll come round——"

" I didn't know how pretty you were," he said, and kissed her while she shut her

eyes before his jungle grin. "Don't scream—there's only my man outside—and he knows his job, or used to. You little devil—— Did you think, after what you've done, I'd let you go away for nothing?"

Jenny Childs opened her eyes. "Let me go, Mr. Strang! At once—or you'll be sorry!"

"They all say that." Louis held her more tightly still. And the door opened, and Lady Alison Fortess showed there. Her eyes did not seem to alter. Jenny Childs, turning her head, furious and beaten, saw a beautiful woman whom she liked at sight. If a woman cannot free her arms, she can still think quickly, and at once Jenny decided that Lady Alison was a great deal too good for a successful little adventurer like this beast Louis. As she thought that she found she could release her arms, for Louis had moved away from her in consternation. The way of revenge upon Louis was suddenly clear to her. She held out Jimmy Frensham's note, remembering, above her loathing of Louis, the accident of the signature.

"You'd better take that, Lady Alison," she said. "I'm Jenny!"

Lady Alison made an admirable exit. They heard the outer door of the flat close.

"That was your fault," said Jenny Childs, reaching for her hat. "I telephoned Lady Alison to come at ten. In case you got very angry, I was going to explain things to her—to tell her the rotten way you treated poor Jimmy. You won't be able to explain anything to her now. Good night, Mr. Strang!"

THERE can only be one winner when two men fight. But sometimes there can be two losers. Perhaps big Jimmy Frensham, somewhere beyond, still smiling, knew that now.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 179.

(The Third of the Series.)

SWEET scented flowers, whose fragrance sheds
An added charm o'er garden-beds.

1. Like lion enters, lamb-like goes,
   And such a hare is mad, one knows.
2. If this is bliss, we may surmise
   That it is folly to be wise.
3. By angry sound a dog declares
   That he for what's inside prepares.
4. A son of Jacob. Sleepy chap?
   At least he always has a nap.
5. A perfume sweet, a German name,
   Read either way it is the same.
6. He has a list, he makes a plot,
   He may be Dickens, Hardy, Scott.
7. Runs round the earth, but is not seen,
   A line that oft is crossed, I mean.
8. Terrific storm, you will agree,
   If roofs are torn, ado there'll be.
9. A stumble, or gay way to go
   Upon the light fantastic toe.
10. To do so, folk in older days
    For Gretna Green would hire a chaise.

BOODLEBAR.

Answers to Acrostic No. 179 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on June 9th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 178.

(The Second of the Series.)

MONARCHS who lived in distant days,
Titles of two of Shakespeare's plays.

1. The gun recoils, the players shoot,
   Pain caused by it may be acute.
2. A famous mount must lose its head.
   Three little words appear instead.
3. More than a dozen should be here,
   But less than twenty must appear.
4. Its sound with joy the hungry greet.
   For soon there will be food to eat.
5. For water up the hill she went;
   Rapid, indeed, was her descent.
6. One word—the worker's daily fate;
   Two words—where few will learn to skate.
7. This mighty range, the abode of snow,
   The world's most lofty peak will show.
8. Of twelve, the last but one: 'tis found
   To be a time when fogs abound.

REMUS.

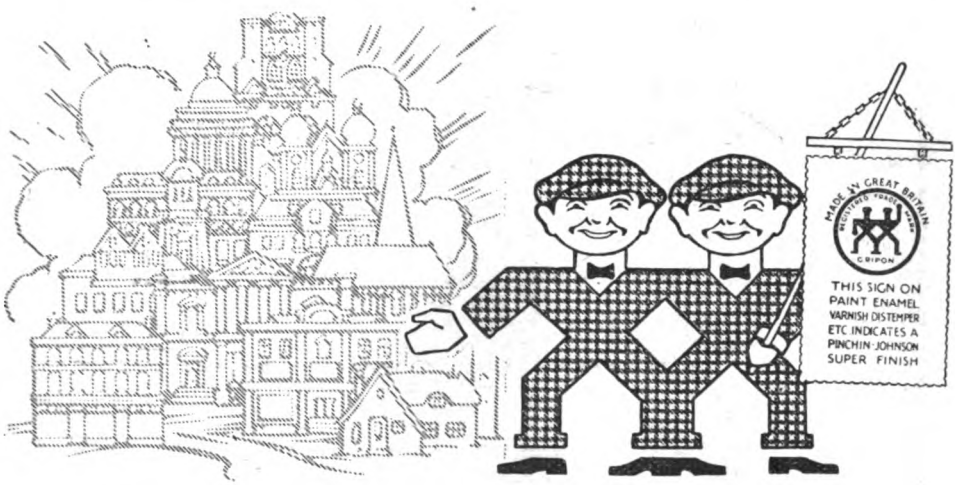
1. K	ic	K
2. I	na	I
3. N	inetee	N
4. G	on	G
5. J	il	L
6. O	ffic	E
7. H	imalay	A
8. N	ovembe	R

NOTE.—Light 2. Sinai.

THIRTY-SEVENTH SERIES: RESULT.

THE last acrostic of the series proved to be very hard, and no solver sent in an answer correct in every light. Two competitors, Initio and Mancu, missed one point only in the whole series; they win the chief prizes, and will receive cheques for £2 6s. each. Eight solvers, who missed two points, come next: Arden, Beggar, Ierne, Lilcat, Nworb, Roc, Ulad, and Zyme take prizes of £1 each. All these ten solvers will be considered ineligible for an acrostic prize in the thirty-eighth series.

Initio is Mr. C. W. Roberts, 18, Highwood Avenue, N.12; Mancu is Mr. L. A. Jones, Asterley, Goldsmid Road, Tonbridge, Kent; Arden is Mr. R. W. Bates, R.N. College, Dartmouth; Beggar is Mr. B. G. Pearce, 5, Ethelbert Road, Bromley, Kent; Ierne is Mrs. R. Cleary Hill, 32, Crosthwaite Park East, Kingstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland; Lilcat is Mr. L. Eaton, 597, Kingston Road, Raynes Park, S.W.20; Nworb is Mr. W. Brown, 24, Winscombe Crescent, Ealing, W.5; Roc is Mr. R. C. Oakley, Dunchurch Hall, Rugby; Ulad is Mr. P. McCullagh, 67, Dalkey Avenue, Dalkey, Co. Dublin, Ireland; Zyme is Mr. J. W. Pulsford, 46, Holmewood Road, Brixton, S.W.2.



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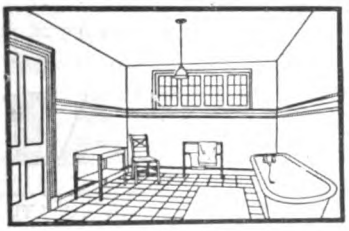

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"—and so to Bed"

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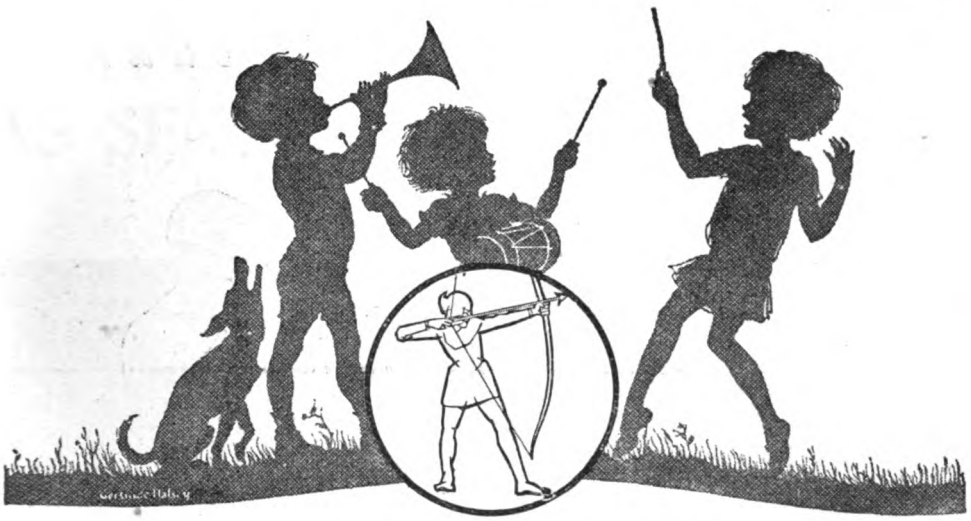

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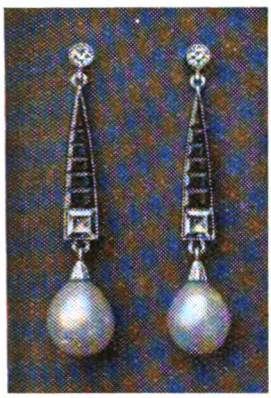

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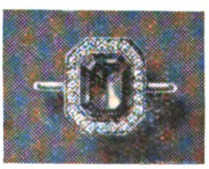

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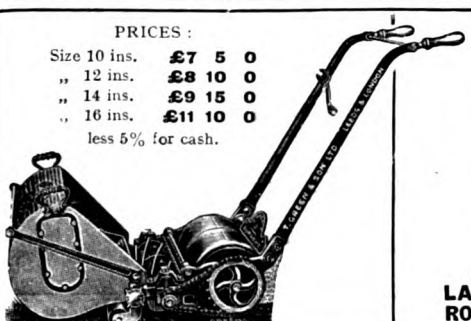

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'OVALTINE'

Ensures Sound, Natural Sleep

Reduced prices in Gt. Britain and Northern Ireland 1/3, 2/- and 3/9 per tin.

P. 454

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"The 'Valet' AutoStrop Razor!"

"Does it strop its own blades?"

"Why, of course, that's its special feature."

"How many shaves do you get from one blade?"

"An average of 50 to 60 without removing the blade from its holder."

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"Two minutes, including 10 secs. for stropping and 10 secs. for cleaning!"

"Are you satisfied with every shave?"

"Absolutely, I'm using the same razor I had in the trenches!"

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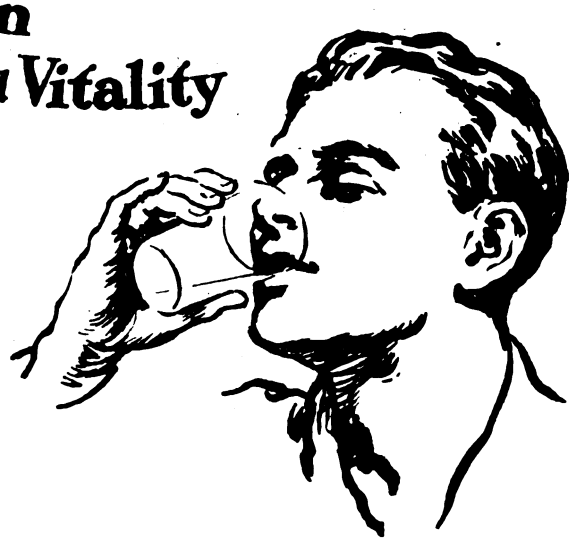

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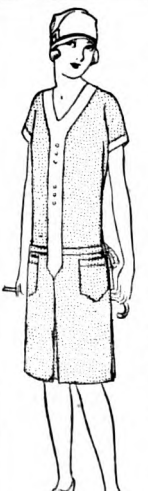

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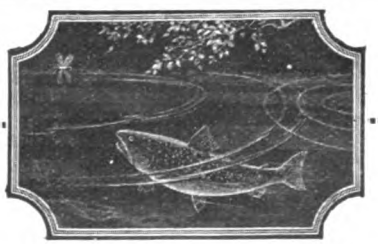

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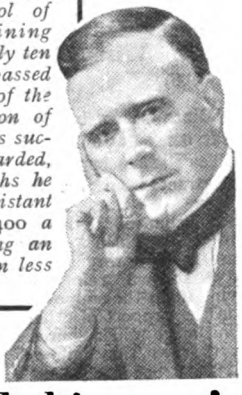

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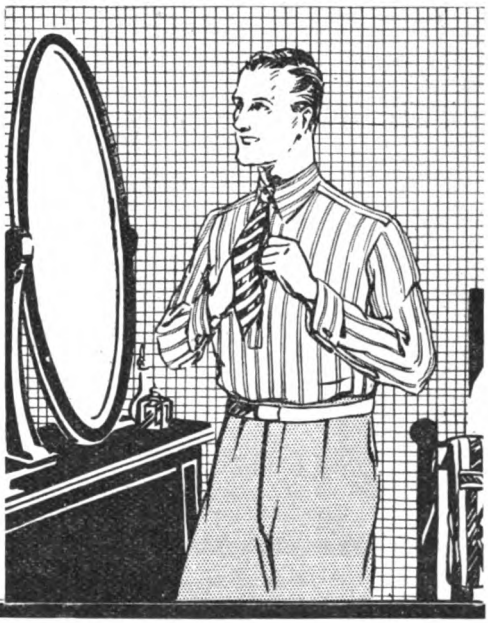

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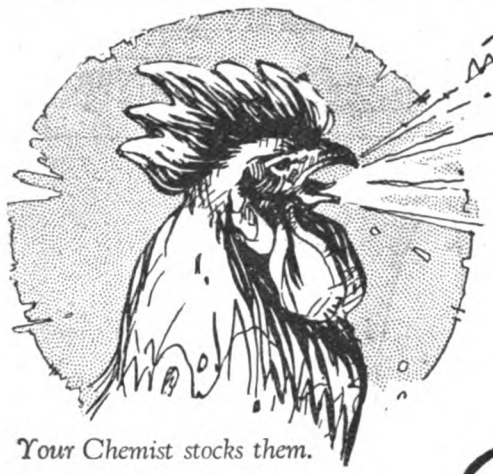

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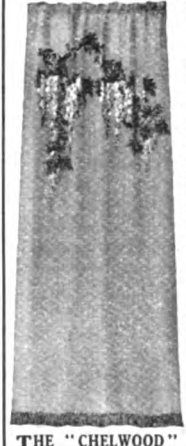

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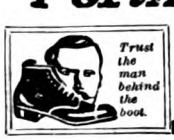

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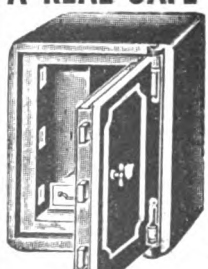

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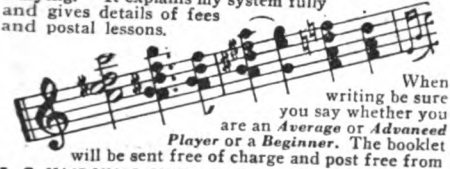

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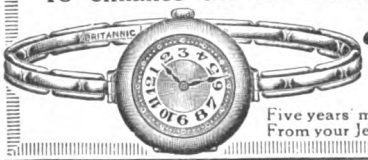

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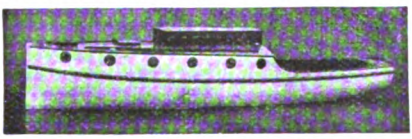

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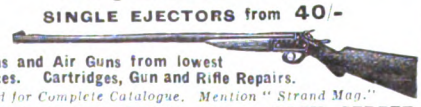

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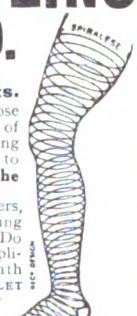

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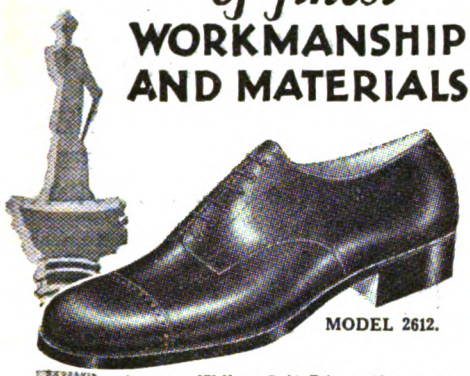

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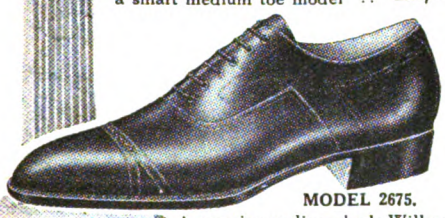

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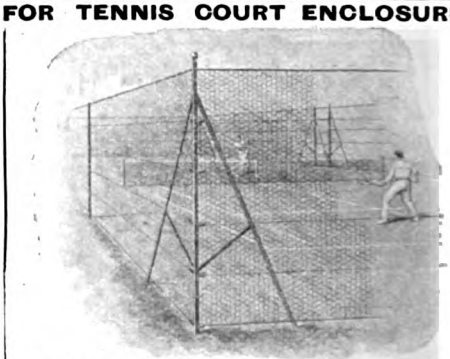

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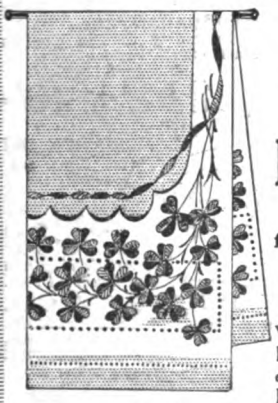

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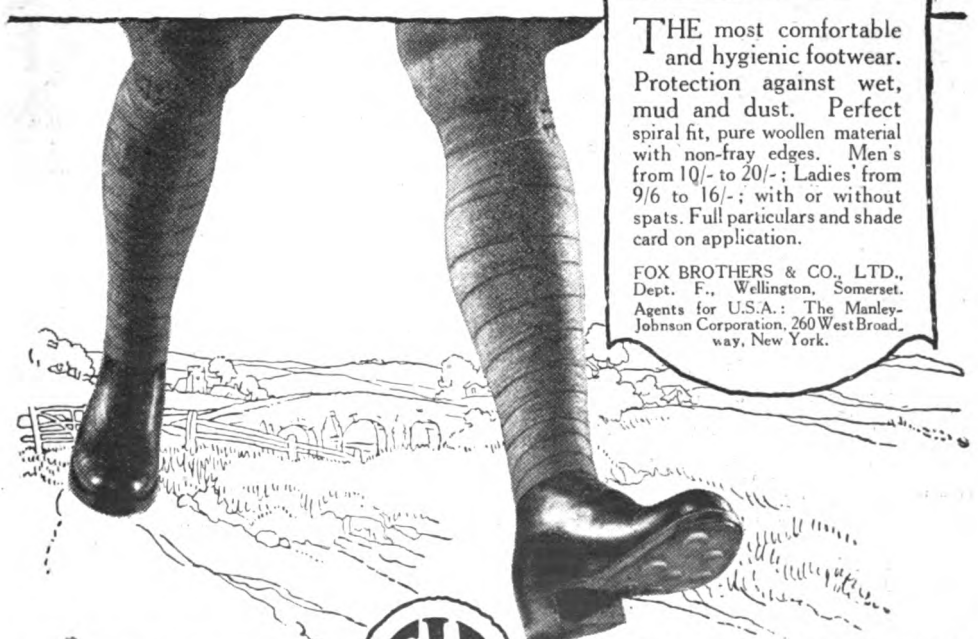

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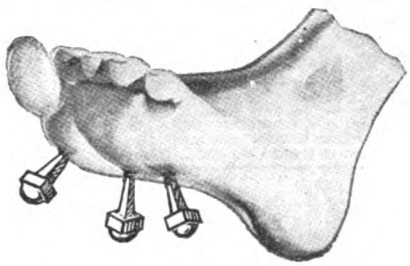

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"*After demobilisation I suffered greatly from rheumatism, and on my return to England from Canada in September, 1919, I tried everything my friends recommended me. Nothing seemed to relieve me of this dreadful malady, and in January, 1920, I went to see a ship's steward, and during our run from Cardiff to Buenos Aires I was again taken with severe rheumatic pains, and on the advice of one of my shipmates, who had with him a bottle of Kruschen, I took a dose of the same every morning for a few days. I soon felt myself getting well and relieved of these pains, and on my return to England I bought a bottle of my own, and although since my first taking Kruschen I have travelled in every climate of the world, still I never now feel the slightest pain.*"

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AN OBSESSION.

Obsession is a large word, a frightening word, and yet it does fit many of the minor manifestations of alcoholism. So many men who do not drink in the usual sense of the word, are yet obsessed with the idea of alcohol. Though they are the last people in the world to admit it, to them the climax of a morning's work is not, as one might imagine, the result of their labours, but the gin and bitters or cocktail that they have been subconsciously visualising ever since they arrived at their office. To continue the theme in a somewhat lighter vein, how often have we not heard golfers say (and mean it) that the best hole was the 19th—and by that they did not in the least mean to imply that the match was square on the home green, and that there was the odd to play!

An incredible number of people regard alcohol as a sort of recompense for the disappointments of life, or as a refuge from its difficulties. It is an almost inevitable attitude when a drug whose danger is commonly assessed by its socially reprehensible results rather than by its inherent malignity is so easy of access, so productive of good fellowship. But

ALCOHOL IS A DRUG,

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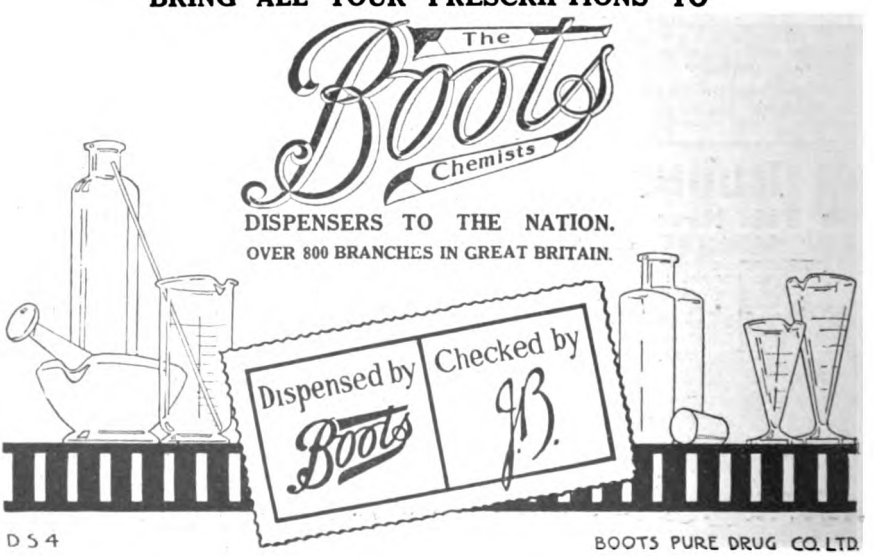

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for June, 1928.

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

THE STRAND MAGAZINE is printed by the Newnes and Pearson Printing Co., Ltd., N. Kensington, and published monthly by the Proprietors, George Newnes, Ltd., 8 to 11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, England. Subscription price to any part of the world, post free, for one year, 15s. (Canada, 13s. 6d.). Registered at the General Post Office for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York, N.Y., Post Office. Cases for binding volumes of THE STRAND MAGAZINE may be obtained to order from Booksellers for 2s. 6d., or post free for 2s. 10d. direct from the Office. Half-yearly Volumes, 7s. 6d. net.
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The Index to Volume 75 can be obtained on application to the Publisher.

Most of the Original Drawings of the Illustrations in this Magazine are for sale. Terms may be had on application to the Cliché Department, George Newnes, Ltd., 8-11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2.

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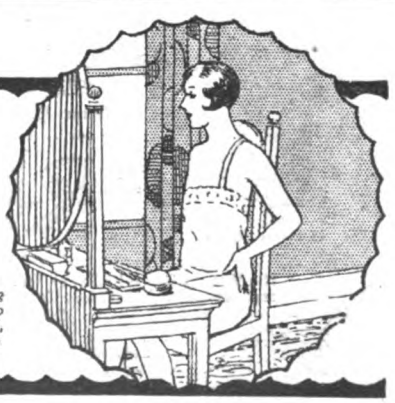

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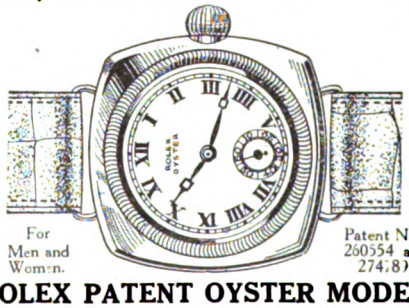

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Waterproof and Dustproof.

In Silver £5 : 15 : 0. 9 Carat 10 Guineas.
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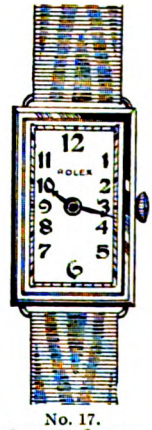

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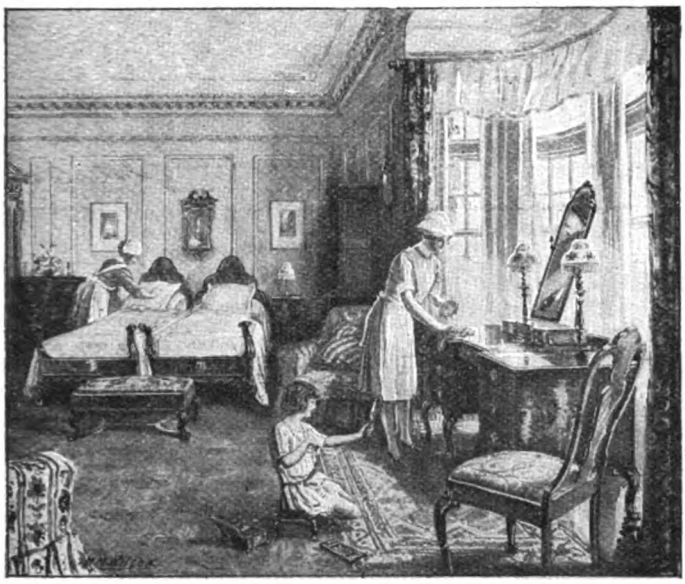

This Beautiful Bedroom

is typical of many, where the beauty of the furniture is maintained by the use of Mansion Polish, the fine wax preparation which gives such a delightful finish and enriches the colour and grain of the wood. Mansion Polish is also excellent for Floors.

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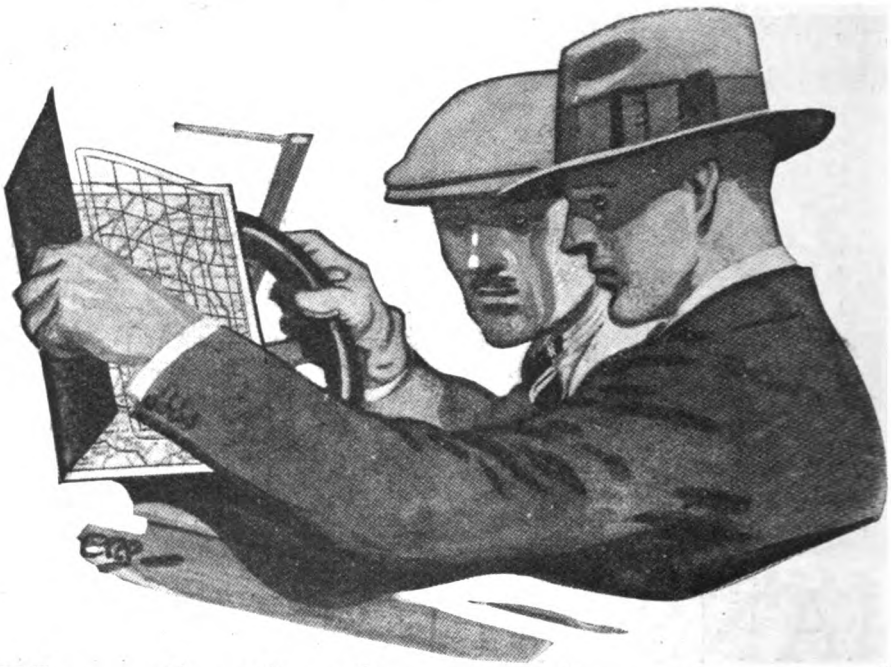
NUT MILK

6D EACH

Said the porter to Thomas, "Dear Sir,
About Fry's Cartets you don't err,
My Missus and I
Other brands often try
But the Cartets we greatly prefer."

To face end of Text.



"Yes, that's the road we want!"

"But I thought you wished to avoid the crowds?"

"So I do. That's why I think we should go this way. It's a new arterial road, only just opened. Hardly anybody knows of its existence yet."

"They must do, if it's marked on the map."

"That's where I score, old man. I haven't got an ordinary map. This is 'Newnes' Motorists' Touring Guide and Road Maps of the British Isles,' and they've put all the new arterial roads in it. You won't find many motorists on this road we're heading for—unless, of course, they've bought the same Guide."

"I can see you haven't used yours much. The maps are so clean."

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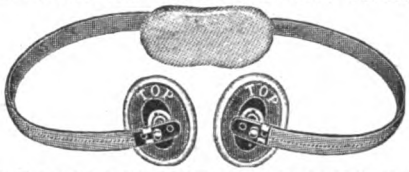

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"PREDESTINED"

by

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In this *unusually* brilliant writer's new novel the dominant theme is the indefinable urge that drives us at times along a certain path contrary to our inmost wishes.

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ANNE DUFFIELD

"Another incident had impressed the Frenchwoman strongly.

On the broad low mantelshelf there was a box of beaten brass which held a greyish powder. Valerie had taken the box in her hands, idly playing with it, and presently, with a glance at her sister, she opened it.

"Oh—very well," Veronica had said, "throw it on if you want to."

And Valerie had flung a handful of the powder on to the glowing oak logs. It smouldered there in a grey cloud, and a sweet acrid scent permeated the room. Louison recalled sharply the effect of that smell of incense upon the assembled group.

Maggie had wrinkled her nose distastefully; Annabelle and little Rosalie obviously liked it; Michael had risen unobtrusively and sauntered to the opened window at the far end of the room (*of course*, reflected Louison, there had been an open window even on that damp and chilly evening).

Valerie had sat very still breathing in that sweet and stinging smoke; her face pale, her extraordinary eyes wide and black and completely devoid of expression, and Julian and Veronica had watched her. Veronica, with an air of mingled annoyance and concern, which seemed exaggerated; Julian with the bright gaze of intense interest.

As the incense burned itself out and the odour lightened, Valerie had seemed to come to herself, to "come back," as Louison put it, with a long sigh.

"You love it, don't you, Val?" It was Julian who spoke.

"Yes, yes." The girl seemed still a trifle dazed. "But it is not quite right——"

"Don't be stupid, Valerie." Veronica's voice had an edge. Clearly Veronica did not approve of her sister's curious predilection for incense. But why? What harm could it do?

Veronica, indeed, could not herself have told why she felt so strongly. She only knew that she dreaded beyond everything this innocent passion of Valerie's."

Extracted from

"PREDESTINED"

Commence reading it to-day.

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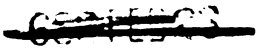

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